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MATILDA MONTFORT;

A

ROMANTIC NOVEL.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

PETER PEREGRINE, Esq.

VOL. I.

..... Lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold. SHAKESPEAR.

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MATILDA MONTFORT.

CHAPTER I.

Ever charming, ever new,
When will the landscape tire the view!
The fountain's fall, the river's flow,
The woody valleys, warm and low;
The windy summit, wild and high,
Roughly rushing on the sky!

DYER.

JAN 7 - 1953

"WE will stop here, my dear," said Montfort to his daughter, as they were proceeding through the vale Le Pui, in the ancient province of Languedoc; "we will stop here, and inquire if I "can purchase a cottage in this neigh-

" bourhood; the fertility of the sur-
" rounding country, and the pleasantness
" of the situation please me much."

He ordered Jacques to stop at the first house of entertainment that he came to; and, whilst the horses were refreshing, asked the landlord, if there was a cottage, with a garden and some land to it, to be disposed of in the vale.

" Yes," said the landlord, " there is
" one that is at present uninhabited,
" and has been for some time past; no-
" body has lived in it since the Marquis
" de Saint Aubyn, who fitted it up for
" himself, to spend a night in occa-
" sionally, during the time the castle
" was repairing; but since the fire, he
" has never been near it, or visited the
" country."

"WAS the castle burnt?" asked Montfort.

"THE Marquis," replied the host, "took possession of his estates in this "province, on the death of his father, "and determined to repair the old cas- "tle, which had been suffered to run "into a state of ruin and decay; and, "accordingly, began upon one of the "towers first, which was scarcely com- "pleted, when it was reduced to its "former state, by a fire that took place, "nobody knew how. He was, how- "ever, determined to go on with the "repairs, having set his mind upon re- "siding here; and it was again nearly "finished, when it was a second time "destroyed by another fire. He built "it up a third time, and just as it was "completed, it was a third time de-

" stroyed. He thought that there was
" some supernatural interference, and
" gave up the intention of repairing it;
" and it now remains in the same state
" as it has done for many years back.—
" Many people thought, as the Mar-
" quis did, that the fire was not the act
" of chance, or the effect of human
" power, but that it was done by su-
" pernatural agency; indeed, some of
" the country people said, that a black
" creature, with a long tail and horns,
" had been seen flying over it, with a
" lighted torch in his hand, just before
" the last fire took place."

" Is the cottage you mention to be
" purchased?" said Montfort.

" That I can't tell," replied the landlord, " but the Marquis's steward

" is now in the house, and he will in-
" form you."

THE steward came to Montfort, and told him, that the cottage might be had, for any length of time upon lease, but that the Marquis would not sell it.

THEY went together to view it, when Montfort was so much struck with its beauty, that he agreed, without hesitation, for a long term, and took possession of it immediately. It was not large, yet large enough for his family, which consisted only of himself and his daughter, with Jacques and Alice, his male and female domestics.

MONTFORD was charmed with his new residence, as well as Matilda, the latter of whom grew every day more

delighted with the romantic prospects that presented themselves in almost every direction.

THE cottage was seated upon a gentle eminence, backed by a delightful bower of evergreens, overtopped by the towering poplar, and the lofty pine. Upon its snow-white walls was trained the far-spreading vine. Mantling jessamines, and convoluted woodbines, twined around the windows, shedding their delicious odours; which, aided by small clumps of flowering shrubs, and the eglantine—sweet smelling plant—filled the circumambient air, with a fragrance that surpassed the boasted perfumes of far-famed Arabia. The balmy zephyrs played upon the bosom of a pellucid lake, from which ran a murmuring stream, that nearly encircled the

cottage, and its garden; forming a kind of peninsula, of enchanting beauty; then taking its meandering course through a flower-fringed glen, enriched with nature's choicest scents, the violet blue, the valley's lily—sweet emblem of infant innocence—was, for a moment, lost to the sight, whilst winding through a tufted grove of variegated hues; again it was discerned, gliding in translucent rills, down the gently-sloping side of a verdant lawn, washing the walls of the ancient castle of Saint Aubyn, now in ruins; then disappeared behind the rugged brow of a curving mountain, round which it flowed; and was again discovered, augmented by collected streams, into a majestic river, rolling magnificently along the dale with undulating motion, till its waves were lost in distant space.

The velvet banks were speckled with woolly flocks, the thoughtless shepherds beguiling time, by playing on their pipes of reed, which the native warblers of the air and woods—the blithsome lark, and thrush of tuneful note—accompanied with their harmonious music, making melody more sweet.

MATILDA thought herself transported into a paradise, which seemed the more enchanting to her as she had never, before she began this journey with her father, been out of Paris, where Montfort had resided, and she with him, in a close and obscure part of the city, as long as she could remember any thing.

CHAPTER II.

Oh say, what sums that gen'rous hand supply?
What mines to swell that boundless charity?

POPE.

MONTFORD was of the middle age of life, not beyond forty, although he appeared to be more, which may be accounted for, by a melancholy, and gloom of mind, under which he seemed to labour, having imparted a rigidity to his features, which lent assurance to the idea that he was at least ten years more. He was dotingly fond of his daughter, and being himself a man of letters, and of extensive knowledge, he had devoted

the greatest part of his time, since Matilda was capable of receiving instruction, in storing her youthful mind with every necessary and accomplished acquirement, that adorns the understanding, and renders the possessor an ornament to society; and he had the satisfaction to find, that his parental efforts were crowned with the completest success.

MATILDA was now in her eighteenth year. She was of a temper and disposition the most engaging; and not only was her mind endowed with every enviable embellishment, but her person also was equally an object of admiration. The symmetry of her form was enchanting, her countenance was charmingly interesting, and her complexion was delicately fair, "the softest blush

" of nature tinging her lovely cheek." A pair of fine dark eyes, the lustre of which could not be surpassed, like two stars shining from their spheres, completed a finished model of beauty. It rarely happens that mental and personal accomplishments go hand in hand with each other. If the mind be well stored with the gifts of nature, the person often wants the attracting form, or the easy carriage, so enviable by all. Or, if the person be handsome, and the features interesting, the mind is frequently deficient in those endowments, so far before the external appearance of the outward form. But here, all-bountiful nature had been lavish of her gifts, both mental and personal, and there was nothing left to wish for, to add to the perfection of the whole.

Montfort was a man, as has been observed, of an excellent understanding; he had, at the same time, a heart that could always feel for the distresses of others; so that ere he had lived long at the cottage, he was almost adored by his numerous neighbours, who looked up to him as their oracle, to guide them in their difficulties, and assist them in their troubles; this he always did to the best of his judgment, which was seldom found to err.

Yet, with all this philanthropy, and excellence of heart, he appeared far from being a happy man. His breast, at times, heaved with sighs, and he was often lost and absorbed in deep thought. Whilst he lived in Paris, he seldom went out of the house; and when he

did, it was always in the night, avoiding all company, or society with the rest of the world.

The new scene of life he had now entered upon, having so much more variety in it than that he had left, was the mean of diverting his thoughts from the point on which they had heretofore appeared to have been fixed. He would now frequently ramble through the vale, and mount the rising hill, admiring the wonder-working hand of nature; contemplating the wisdom and beneficence of almighty Providence, in his productions for the use of man. Sometimes his eyes would be fixed upon the animal, now upon the vegetable, creation; animate, or inanimate, he still found cause for wonder and for praise: whether he watched the first, from the timid hare,

the fleecy sheep, and branched deer, to the horned ox of giant stature: or the latter, from the humble salad creeping upon the bosom of the earth, to the clustered grape, the pendent citron, and tawny orange; or the golden fields, whose undulating burthen invites the dividing hand of the sturdy reaper--all for the use of man.

MATILDA was unacquainted with the cause of the disquietude of her father's mind, nor did she ever hint to him any desire she had to be informed of it, lest it should add still more to the uneasiness under which he seemed to labour; and now she did not even think of his past gloomy behaviour, so elate was she with the great alteration in him. It is true, that a heavy sigh would sometimes escape him in the

midst of conversation, though he did not, as before, indulge in it; but, immediately suppressing it, he would assume a cheerful air, which seemed to drive away the unpleasant thought that had occasioned it.

MATILDA shewed by her manner, too plain for her father not to perceive it, the filial affection she bore for him, at all times; but now, that there was such an improvement in his spirits, she displayed it by her artless, unfeigned joy, which endeared her to him more, if possible, than ever.

" O! my dear father," she would say, " how happy am I in this paradise! " Bless, a thousand times bless, the day " we left Paris!"

THEN, taking his hand, she would press it to her ruby lips, whilst extatic tears of delight would chace each other, in pearly drops, down her damask cheek, till her doting father would catch her in his arms, and kiss the trickling dew away.

WHILST Montfort employed himself in his study, or was engaged in his walks, Matilda amused herself at her music, or in tending some favourite shrubs in her garden, the management of which her father had given up entirely to her direction. She would, sometimes, stray into the neighbouring hamlet, where she had, more than once, surprised him in stolen acts of charity and benevolence, exercising them to an extent, far beyond what she had always understood his fortune would afford.

She would say to herself, "How "does the goodness of my father's heart "shew itself in these acts of genero- "sity! What deprivations must he "not suffer, to enable him to exercise "them, out of his small fortune! How "much more valuable are they in the "sight of him who judges of the intent, "than the ostentatious sums drawn "from the purse of the rich and great! "My father, at the expence of per- "sonal convenience, shares the little "he possesses, with those who want it.

"He hath a tear for pity, and a hand
"Open as day for melting charity."

"To do all in my power to enable him "to indulge in his pious propensity, I "will suffer every deprivation of luxury "also."

In a little time after this, she one morning came to her father with a cheerful air, and told him that she had saved a purse, out of the money he allowed her for her expences, and desired he would take it, and distribute it as he thought proper; as, she was convinced, there were many in the neighbourhood, that he would wish to relieve to an extent, beyond what he frequently told her his finances would allow him.

"My dearest child," said he, "I "applaud your motives, but I have, at "present, sufficient for my own wants, "and to relieve those of my poor dis- "tressed neighbours. When I have "occasion for further aid, and you can "assist me out of your savings, I will "borrow from you what you can spare, "to repay you always double for it.

This, however, did not satisfy the mind of Matilda, and she bestowed her charity herself, having from that time a set of little pensioners of her own, selected out of the poorest families in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER III.

How rev'rend is the face of this tall pile,
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads!

CONGREVE.

THE old castle of Saint Aubyn was a favourite retreat of Montfort; he generally called to rest himself, after his distant rambles, on the fragments of stones that strewed the floor; or, he would mount the battlements, and view the distant country round—the variegated hill, and verdant dale. Or, he would sometimes sit, absorbed in thought, while time rolled away, unheeded by him.

On one of these occasions, as he was sitting at the foot of a broken stair-case, he heard a deep groan, which appeared at no great distance from him. He was startled, and listened attentively, expecting to hear it repeated, but all remained silent. He was astonished, as he had so often visited the castle before, and had never, till now, heard any noise there.

He determined upon an examination of the inside of the building. He entered every accessible part above the ground floor, but did not perceive any thing worth notice, almost the whole of it being roofless, and open to the sky. From the ground floor he descended a stair-case, and went through a number of vaulted passages, which brought him to a door, that appeared strongly barri-

cadoed, having an iron bar across it, fastened at one end with a large padlock. He had an irresistible wish to penetrate this apartment, but how to accomplish it he knew not, as the bar of iron, and the great lock, seemed to be of a strength sufficient to baffle every effort he could make. However, upon approaching nearer to it, he found that the strength was all in appearance, as time had so rusted the iron, that the lock gave way to the first touch. He entered, but did not see any thing that served to repay his curiosity.

As he was leaving the apartment, he discovered, at the farthest side, another door, which easily yielded to his hand, and shewed him a niche in the wall, with a stone seat in it, upon which was sitting the skeleton of a human figure,

nearly complete, upon the wrists and legs of which, were massy chains, with which it appeared to have been fastened to the wall. He searched every part of the niche, and of the room in which it was situated, in hopes of finding something by which he could elucidate what he had seen.

As he was departing from the place that contained the skeleton, and was closing the door, that it might be left as he had found it, he saw upon the floor something in the form of a letter. He took it up, and perceived that it was a piece of parchment, folded and sealed; the superscription on which was—

" The person who may find this, is " earnestly requested to deliver it into

" the hands of the Marquis de Saint " Aubyn; and, until that time, to keep " secret frem every one, what he may " have discovered in this castle."

MONTFORT was determined to comply with the injunction contained in this address, both as to the delivery of it to the Marquis only; and until then, as to the silence respecting what he had seen and heard.

HE now left the castle; but his curiosity not being yet satisfied, as to the groan he had heard there, his intention was to endeavour to search still farther, the next time he should visit it.

IN a day or two afterwards, he again called, and recommenced his examination. He now found many apartments

under ground, which had before escaped his observation; but, in not any of them did he see aught that could throw any new light upon what had happened. He continued exploring the building and its immediate contiguity, as long as the light of day continued, when he was obliged to leave off his search, despairing of finding out any explanation of the groan he had heard. As to the skeleton, it appeared certain, from the situation in which he had found it, that it had belonged to some person who had been murdered there; and which, it was very probable, the parchment he had found would explain to the Marquis de Saint Aubyn, who, perhaps, was the only living person interested in the circumstance.

He was so wrapt in thought upon

this subject, that time passed imperceptibly away, when the distant hamlet clock, beating with his iron tongue the brazen bell, sent through the elastic element the vibrating sound, and reminded him, that night had reached her utmost verge. It was one of those nights, when thick black clouds cover heaven's high arch with impenetrable darkness. The wind blew, whistling through the branched trees, the pendent leaves rustling with the gale. The distant watch dog barked on his nightly guard, scaring the lawless ruffian from his midnight prey. The night birds flitted about the roofless walls, shrieking their discordant notes, making darkness more frightful.

As he was departing from the castle, he thought he heard the sound of foot-

steps; but listening for some time, and silence reigning throughout, he was convinced he was mistaken, and that the sound he had heard, was occasioned by the wind. He had not proceeded far, however, before he found himself attacked by two men, who he supposed had an intention of robbing him. He defended himself as long as he was able, and was upon the point of giving way to superior strength, when the moon, just now emerging from behind a dark murky cloud, shone with silver brightness, and discovered to him at a short distance, a young man running to his assistance. This added new strength to his arm; he acquired fresh energy, and with the aid of the stranger, beat off his adversaries; who, by the groans they uttered in their retreat, he had no doubt were much wounded.

If it had not been for the opportune arrival of the stranger, he must soon have fallen under their swords, as he was nearly exhausted, through the great loss of blood he had sustained, during the combat, from several wounds he had received, the extent of which he now first found. He was so extremely weak, that the young stranger, after inquiring where he resided, was obliged to bear him in his arms to the cottage where he himself lived, that of Montfort being at too great a distance for him to be taken to, in the state he then was.

CHAPTER IV.

..... Intreat the north
To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips,
And comfort me with cold.

SHAKESPEAR.

MONTFORT was put to bed, in a state of insensibility, at the cottage of old Dumain, whose son it was, who had rescued him from the swords of the assassins. Matilda was sent for, who flew upon the wings of filial duty and affection, to the bed side of her father. She immediately sent to the village, for the only surgeon of the place, who, after dressing his wounds, declared that

he could not answer for the consequence; a considerable degree of fever had already taken place; and it would depend upon the turn that took, whether he would recover or not. The next day, the fever raged with increased violence, and the wounds put on an appearance of an approaching mortification. Montfort perceived the dangerous state he was in, and expecting his speedy dissolution, he desired his daughter and he might be left alone for a few minutes.

When every one else had retired from the chamber, he took the weeping Matilda by the hand, and said, "My "dearest child, I feel the cold hand of "death lay heavy on me, and that the "prospects of this world are nearly "closing upon me for ever. I regret

" not the loss of life, but on your ac-
" count, my only earthly joy, and
" worldly comfort. To leave you to
" be tossed, unprotected, on the world's
" inhospitable wild, is more than I can
" bear to think of, with the resignation
" that I feel I ought. O! my daugh-
" ter, methinks I see thee exposed to
" the lawless insults of ruffian man, a
" prey to vile deceit, or open fraud,
" without a monitor to caution thee a-
" gainst the one, or a friend to protect
" thee from the other. I see thee in
" the arms of lustful power. I trace
" thee to the silent chamber, a victim
" to unmerited gloom and melancholy,
" a lengthened corse, brought to a pre-
" mature death; and all might have
" been prevented, if thy unhappy fa-
" ther had——had what?——Yes, my
" child, I must tell thee; this is not a

" time to hide any circumstance of my
" life from thee, in which thou art in-
" terested. But let me pause; I feel
" myself exhausted.——O, God! keep
" still this throbbing heart, which beats
" with such convulsive violence, at the
" thought of what is past. Instil not
" into the breast of my dearest child,
" hatred of her father's memory, when
" she shall be informed of the scenes of
" blood he has been engaged in.——
" Blood! O, Heaven!—Oh!—Oh!"

His feelings were here overpowered, and he sunk motionless into the arms of Matilda. She called for assistance, and, at length, Montfort again opened his eyes; but he was not able to speak.

Matilda inquired, if there were

not any other surgeons near, that she might send for, to lend their aid; and when answered in the negative, immediately resolved to send Jacques to the next large town, which was about four leagues off, with directions to bring with him the most eminent physician, and surgeon, that the place afforded.—They arrived in the course of the day, and declared, that their patient had been very improperly treated, both in the management of his wounds, and in the medicines that had been administered to him. They made a total change in both; and, in a short time, Matilda had the heart-felt satisfaction to be told, that they pronounced her father to be in a state of convalescence, and that they considered him to be out of danger.

MONTFORT was not able to leave his room for a considerable time after this, and was constantly attended by his daughter, who amused him, sometimes by reading to him, at others by playing on her lute, some of his favourite airs, in which she would be accompanied by young Dumain, upon either the German flute, or hautboy, on both of which instruments he was an excellent player, and was an incomparable judge of music altogether. He was a young man of uncommonly good natural abilities, which had been cultivated by the best of educations, the expence of which, it was a matter of surprise to the neighbours, how his father could defray.

MONTFORT was now able to bear being removed to his own cottage, where he arrived, to the infinite joy of

his neighbours, who poured in their congratulations in abundance, in their honest, artless manner. Old Alice too, who had a great and unfeigned regard for her master, was as much rejoiced at his recovery as any of them, she having lived with him for many years, and had nursed Matilda. Jacques was not behind hand, in expressing the joy he felt at his master being once more able to get within his own doors. In short, there was a general rejoicing throughout the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER V.

Mocking danger, made my foes his own.

HOME.

MONTFORT was again able to resume his rambles through the vale, and over the adjacent hills; but did not venture to be far from home at night, fearing lest he might be again beset, in the manner he had been before.

THE more he thought of that transaction, the more bewildered in idea was he, respecting the motives of his assailants: he first thought that their intentions were to rob him, but many circumstances occurred to do away that

idea, which did not at the time present themselves to him. If their intent was plunder, it is very improbable that they should have been in that unfrequented part of the valley, where they could not expect to meet with any booty worth their notice, or scarcely with a human being at that time of night, it being chance only that had then brought him there. Besides, they had not, either before or after, attempted any other robbery, nor had that part or the country ever been known to be infested with robbers. He, therefore, at last, concluded that he must have been taken for another person, whom it was meant to have assassinated, and in whose place he should have fallen, but for the timely interference of Dumain. At all events, he did not judge it prudent to visit the castle at night again.

Being determined to follow strictly the injunction imposed upon him, by the superscription of the folded and sealed parchment he had found, he did not mention either to Dumain or to Matilda, that he had been in the castle on that night, previous to the attack made upon him; all he informed them was, that he had strolled later than usual, and was then returning home.

Gratitude, which flowed in the heart of Montfort, as much as in that of any human being, bound him in friendship to Dumain, who often accompanied him in his distant walks, and from whose lively and well-timed remarks, he derived great pleasure and satisfaction. He discovered in him a depth of understanding, and a knowledge of the world, unusual in a young

man of his age, not being more than twenty.

But what won upon the feelings of Montfort most, were the philanthropy and benevolence of Dumain's bosom; who, to serve a fellow creature, would brave every danger, and suffer every deprivation, that could present themselves in the way of accomplishing the generous dictates of his heart. The cast of Montfort's disposition being formed in the same mould, it is not surprising that he should view Dumain with a degree of friendship, beyond what gratitude alone would generate; and, that he should take a pleasure in his society, beyond what would arise merely from his enlightened conversation, or the lively sallies of his wit.

When Matilda was employed about her household affairs, or in her studies, in the prosecution of both of which she always dedicated a certain portion of each day, Dumain would play at chess with Montfort, and would not return home till late.

Matilda, finding her father engaged one evening at that game, took a walk into the valley, a considerable distance from the cottage; and, after rather tiring herself with the exercise, sat down on a mossy bank, in a favourite bower, admiring the beauty and serenity of the evening.

The moon's silver beams shed a pale lustre o'er the face of nature; the fretted firmament shone with sparkling splendour; the undulating clouds, with

milky whiteness, passed slowly along the vast aërial expanse. All was hush as death; save when the tuneful nightingale breathed out her melodious notes, filling the silent air with vocal harmony unequalled; and, save the melancholy murmur of a rippling streamlet, that crept gently along the rocky bottom of the sequestered dale.

She left the bower, and was returning slowly to the cottage, when a man sprung suddenly from behind a tuft of trees, and bore her in silence in his arms, with rapidity across the valley. He ascended the opposite bank, and carried her towards a carriage, that was standing at no great distance, apparently for the purpose of receiving her, with the post-boy ready mounted.

She shrieked loudly, and made what resistance she was able, but her feeble frame stood a poor chance against the superior strength of her assailant; and they soon reached the carriage, into which the man had nearly forced her, she still shrieking, and calling for help, at the same time. Her cries brought her assistance, when she had given up the expectation of receiving any.

Dumain, happening to be returning home from the cottage, heard the sound of distant cries of distress: he made to the spot with all the haste he could, and arrived in time to rescue from the hands of her brutal ravisher, the sinking Matilda. After a short contest with his opponent, he overpowered him, and delivered his destined prey from the rude grasp of his savage strength; who,

when he found that he must yield to Dumain, ran off, down the steep bank, into the valley, and soon disappeared; the post-boy having driven off with the carriage during the struggle.

DUMAIN had now time to turn his eyes towards the lovely prey of the lawless ruffian, and instantly cried out, "Good Heaven! Matilda Montfort! "Blessed, a thousand times blessed, "be the propitious moment that led "me to the deliverance of the most "lovely, and most excellent of her sex! "This hour I shall ever think the happiest of my life!"

MATILDA expressed her feelings in terms of unfeigned thanks, as he accompanied her home. She leaned upon his arm, to assist her in supporting her

trembling, agitated frame, as she moved upon her tottering limbs. The sweet sensation of the pleasing burthen, with thrilling extacy, and quick vibration, ran along his nerves, till it reached his throbbing heart, and remained in full possession there.

Montfort had already come out, in search of his darling daughter, for whose absence he began to be uneasy. They met him as he was opening the garden gate; he turned back with them into the cottage, when she related to him how she had been surprised, and hurried across the valley up the opposite bank; and was just upon the point of being forced into a carriage, that appeared to be waiting there for the purpose, when kind Providence sent Dumain to her assistance.

Montfort poured out his gratitude in thanks to Dumain for this second interference, to save from destruction, first himself, and now his beloved Matilda, who was dearer to him even than himself.

This attempt upon his daughter preyed deep upon the mind of Montfort; which, when connected with the recent attack on his life at the old castle, he could not help thinking was a deep-laid scheme; and that each was but a part of the whole. He could not conceive from what quarter it sprang; he had had very little connexion with any person in the vicinity of the cottage, since his residence there, excepting in his acts of charity to his poor neighbours; and out of that intercourse, he

was certain it could not arise: besides, it was plain, that it was directed by some person in a higher sphere of life, from the circumstance of being furnished with a carriage and servant, in the attempt upon Matilda.

When he thought of the attack upon her, he was at a still greater loss, for he did not know that she had even been seen by any person, since they came to the cottage, except their poor neighbours, as before mentioned; and, he did not think it possible that they could have been traced from Paris; besides, she was very little known even there. However, he was determined to be more upon his guard than he had been; and to watch with attention, if any suspicious circumstances should arise, or

persons appear, that might lead to any thing, by which he could form a judgment, who might be the actors in the plot, and what their motives.

CHAPTER VI.

Wakes to horror the tremendous strings.

ARMSTRONG.

THE late transactions caused Montfort to relapse into his former gloom and dulness. Sighs would frequently escape him, which he no longer strove to suppress. He even mentioned to Matilda that he had some thoughts of leaving the cottage, and of going to reside in a distant part of the kingdom. She could not help feeling great uneasiness at the change in her father's spirits, and would often think of, and shudder

at, the expression he made use of, when he lay ill at Dumain's cottage, Yet, she could not believe that a heart like his, open to charity and compassion, in so extended a degree, could be led to be engaged in scenes of blood; she therefore attributed what he had said, to the effect of delirium, from the height of his fever; and she was confirmed in that opinion, by his silence upon the subject since, not having ever even hinted at it; as, she thought, had he known what he said, it was very probable that he would have given some explanation, or made some excuse, to have obliterated the effect that it might have had on her mind.

Montfort now went out on his walks more frequently alone than he had lately done, Dumain having often

before been his companion. One evening, he did not return at his usual hour, at which Matilda was uneasy. She went into the garden, and listened to the passing breeze, hoping that every waft would bring the wished-for sound of his approaching footsteps. She was led by her anxious wishes, to stray some distance from the cottage, into a shrubbery, the paths in which led to the brow of a gentle hill, that overlooked the valley.

The evening was fine and serene, a gentle western breeze, softly rustling among the leafy tenants of the grove, was all the noise to be heard. The sun had sunk, in the midst of fiery splendour, beneath the horizon, and night had begun to spread her sable mantle, when Matilda turned to descend the

hill she had mounted. She had not proceeded far, before she was alarmed at the sound of a human voice; she listened attentively, and heard her name pronounced, in the following exclamation.

" O, Matilda! my heaven of joy; my " only earthly hope; my all for which " I wish to live: why has fate denied " me the bliss of courting you to be " mine?"

This was followed by a tune on the German flute, which, by the air, she knew was played by Dumain, being one of his own composing, and of which she had, a day or two before, expressed great admiration.

She now hastened back to the cot-

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tage, not wishing to be discovered by Dumain; as, in that case, he must know he had been overheard by her, which it was very probable would lead to an immediate explanation of what he had said. This she was determined, if possible, to avoid; for if, as he had said, fate had placed a bar to his wishes to address her honourably, it was not consistent with prudence to indulge the hope of what could never be accomplished. How fate had placed that bar, she could not think; she was the daughter of a man that had no claim to a higher alliance, or to greater wealth, than old Dumain possessed; nor, did she suppose, Dumain had any claim to an alliance superior to her.

Ever since she became first acquainted with Dumain, through the service

he rendered her father, by saving him from the swords of assassins, she had looked upon him with an eye of partiality; but, when he afterwards rescued her from the gripe of a ruffian, gratitude was strengthened by love, and she bore for him a sincere affection. The thousand little nameless attentions he shewed to her, served but to bind that affection stronger.

As she had never entertained a thought of any moment, that she concealed from her father, she determined to acquaint him with what she had overheard Dumain say in the shrubbery, and be guided by his direction, in her future conduct to him.

When she got back to the cottage, she found that her father was returned.

He had been detained by one of his poor neighbours, who was lying on a bed of sickness, to whom he had been administering medicines, both to the body and to the soul. He inquired of Matilda, what had kept her so late from home? She told him, that she went in expectation of meeting him, and had walked farther than she intended; and then mentioned the words she had overheard Dumain utter.

" My dear child," said he, " I have " a great regard for Dumain; gratitude " first bound me to him, and the more " I am acquainted with him, the more " I find to admire. What he means by " fate having denied him the power of " addressing you in marriage, I know " not; but this I would have you to " impress upon your mind, that impo-

" sing fate has placed a bar insurmount-
" able, to your ever listening to him
" upon that head, if he were so in-
" clined."

" My dear father's will is to his Ma-
" tilda, ever binding as the strongest
" law," said she; " but," taking his hand, " may I not know, my dear Sir,
" in which way fate has placed such a
" bar?"

" Not now, my dear; a time will
" come when you must know all," replied he.

" I bow with submission to my fa-
" ther's reasons for secrecy in this; yet,
" there is a matter, that I could hope
" for information on, if my father has
" not the same cause for secrecy; and

" Heaven knows, I am not by curi-
" osity urged, nor by any other mo-
" tive, but that of pouring balm into
" the apparently afflicted bosom of my
" dearest father, by" ——— " Ha!"
said he, interrupting her, " you have
" thrown a fire-brand into my heart,
" Matilda; never, never again, I charge
" you, allude, in any manner whatever
" to this subject, but as you have hi-
" therto refrained from diving into the
" cause of my uneasiness, continue
" wise, and continue silent."

He had never spoke to his daughter in so harsh and peremptory a manner before; she could not bear it, but burst into tears, and throwing herself in his lap, cried out, " Forgive, forgive me,
" my father."

He clasped her in his arms, and held her for some time; then eagerly gazing at her, heaved a deep sigh, and said, "O! Matilda, thou know'st not what "thy father suffers; but I was too harsh "with thee, remembrance of time past "got the better of me; yet, be assured, "my child, thy father never acted dis-"honourably."

Supper being now brought in, put a stop to any further conversation on the subject. Matilda could not eat, and Montfort seemed as little inclined; so that the cloth was removed, almost as soon as it was laid.

Matilda, soon afterwards, retired to bed, lighted by Alice, who whilst she was undressing, said, "Ah! Made-"moiselle, I longed for you to come

" up stairs, for Jacques told me, that
" neither my master or you ate any
" supper, and that you did not speak
" to each other. I hope nothing has
" happened, to make a difference be-
" tween you."

" I WOULD not hurt my father wil-
" lingly," said Matilda; " I'd rather
" suffer any thing, than knowingly give
" him a moment's uneasiness; and yet,
" I fear, I have wounded his mind, so
" that he will not soon recover."

" I HOPE, Mademoiselle, you did
" not say any thing about his melan-
" choly."

" YES, I did Alice, and shall never
" forgive myself for it. I asked him if
" I might not be informed of the cause,

" that I might lend my assistance, to as-
" suage the disquietude of his mind."

" Ah! poor man," said Alice, " he
" cannot forget it. I well remember
" the time; and if I do, how must he
" remember it!"

" Do you know the cause of his un-
" easiness then?" asked Matilda.

" Too well I do," replied the other,
" but never shall these lips utter a
" word of it to any person living; I
" have sworn upon the testament, that
" I would keep it secret, and it shall
" die with me."

MATILDA was not in spirits to pur-
sue the conversation, nor was she in-
clined to ask any questions of Alice, re-

specting what her father had forbidden her to pry into; yet, she could not avoid being surprised, that he should trust a secret in the bosom of a domestic, which he refused to his daughter.

CHAPTER VII.

There are passions grateful to the breast,
And yet no friends to life.
.....
Some have died for love; and some run mad.

ARMSTRONG.

WHEN Montfort met his daughter at breakfast, the next morning, he appeared more cheerful than he had been for some time, and discoursed, as usual, on indifferent subjects; but did not once allude to what had passed the evening before, although it was very evident, that it had taken hold of the mind of Matilda, as her eyes and pale countenance

plainly denoted, that she had spent the night without rest or sleep.

After breakfast, Montfort took his customary ramble, whilst Matilda retired to her chamber, with a heart oppressed by a double weight—pity for her father, and grief, that she had, imprudently, been the cause of calling up his disquietude afresh.

Soon after, Alice came and informed her, that Dumain had called, that he was then below, and, that upon finding Montfort was from home, he wished particularly to see her.

It was some time since he had been at the cottage, and what he could now want so particularly to see her for, she could not conceive; however, she was

not in spirits to see him, and, therefore, sent down an excuse.

When her father returned at dinner, he told her, that he had been employed in reconciling one of his neighbours to the choice that his daughter had made of a husband; that the old man had long objected to the match; and, the young couple having applied to him, for his good offices, in endeavouring to persuade the father to consent to their marriage, he had happily succeeded, and they were to be united the next day; and in the evening, they were to have a dance on the green, to which they meant to invite her.

Accordingly, the next morning, the young couple were married, and in

the evening their rustic friends assembled on the grassy lawn; and to the pipe's enlivening tune, in fantastic mazy steps, they passed the hours away. Matilda was there, and expected to see Dumain; for though fate had placed a bar between their loves, her innocent heart, knew no harm in joining with him in the merry dance, or in conversing with him, as before. She was disappointed, and felt uneasy. Perhaps, she thought, he purposely avoided her, knowing it impossible that they should ever meet in wedlock: "Yet, if that "was the case," she cried to herself, "why did he call upon me, and so much "wish to see me?" She could not enter with spirit into the festivity of the evening, and she was glad when the hour arrived to depart.

THE unquiet state of Matilda's mind preventing her from sleeping, she rose early the next morning, and took a walk in the garden; from thence she ascended the gently-sloping brow of a tufted hill, at the back of the cottage, the sun then proudly rising in the dappled east, drawing night's sable curtains, and shining with refulgent brightness on the misty mountains' tops, the lark, the herald of the morn, tuning his blithsome note, and soaring high in air, the sound dying away on the enraptured ear in melodious sweetness. Matilda seated herself on a grass-grown seat, near the summit of the rising ground, from whence she watched the happy hinds, in thoughtless cheerfulness, beginning their daily toil; and the careless, airy shepherds, driving from the pens their woolly flock, whistling the

self-taught tune, as they trudged along the vale below.

She was sitting in contemplative silence, when she heard, at no great distance from her, the sound of the German flute, playing the well-known air she had heard the last time she was on this hill, and which she knew to be Dumain's. She was hesitating within herself, whether she should endeavour to get back to the cottage, or remain where she was, when Dumain approached her; but, good Heaven! how unlike that Dumain she had seen but a week or two before. The ruddy health and airy smiles, that bloomed in his countenance, had given way to the pallid hue of sickness, and of sadness.—Gloom and melancholy had usurped the seat of cheerfulness, and of wit, and

seemed to have taken full possession of all his faculties.

" Good God," cried Matilda, as soon as she saw him, " you are ill, Du-" main!"

" I am indeed ill," said he; " and I " have been ill for some time past."

" Have you not had advice? You " should not lose any time, but send " for a physician immediately. I am " sure my father will let Jacques go for " the same that attended him, when he " lay at your cottage."

" No, Matilda, a physician can be " of no service to me, my complaint " is here," laying his hand upon his breast; " yet I feel my spirits cheered,

" to find that Matilda has the conde-
" scension to interest herself for the
" health of the unhappy Dumain.—
" May I hope that she will continue to
" sometimes think of him, when he will
" be distant many, many leagues?"

" WHERE are you going, Dumain?" asked Matilda.

" THAT I don't know," replied he, " but here, I cannot, must not stay."

MONTFORT, having been uneasy at the absence of his daughter at breakfast, which had waited some time for her, went out in search of her, and knowing this to be a favourite walk with her, had come to look for her there, and arrived just as Dumain spoke the last sentence.

He was shocked to see the alteration in his appearance, which he attributed to the true cause. He had for some time discovered the state of Dumain's heart towards his daughter, and, at the same time, found that she did not behold him with an impartial eye, which was the reason he did not give him the same encouragement to visit the cottage as before.

He now learned from Dumain, that it was his intention, to travel to some distant part of the kingdom, in hopes, that it would have the effect of reinstating him in his health. Montfort encouraged this resolution, as he had reasons, notwithstanding gratitude and friendship had bound him to Dumain, that induced him to wish to put an end to the intercourse between Matilda and

him, and was very glad to find, that he had come to that determination.

" When do you mean to begin your " travels, Dumain?" said Montfort.

" I mean to set off to-morrow," said he; " it was my intention to have gone " this morning, but I could not bring " myself to leave the valley, without " bidding you and Matilda farewell; " for which purpose, I called at the " cottage a day or two since, but was " not so happy as to see either of " you."

After taking an affectionate leave of Montfort and his daughter, they parted; Dumain towards his father's cottage, and Matilda and her father to their's. When he had left them a few

seconds, he turned back to have a last look at Matilda, who happening to turn her head at the same moment, she received another farewell, in the waving of his hat. He stood taking a long lingering look, till he lost sight of them turning into the garden.

CHAPTER VIII.

I, who with more than manly strength have bore
The various ills impos'd by cruel fate,
Sustain the firmness of my soul no more,
But sink beneath the weight.

SHAW.

"POOR Dumain!" said Montfort, as he was sipping his coffee, a day or two after the last interview, "Poor Dumain! "I fear it will be long, before he will "be able to undertake his journey."

"Is he not set out?" asked Matilda.

"IN my walk down the valley to-day, "I met his father, who told me that his

" son was in a high fever, and confined
" to his bed. I fear it will go hard
" with him."

MATILDA's heart fluttered; her colour forsook her cheeks; it was with difficulty she could keep her seat. Her father saw her distress, and calling to Jacques, who was digging in the garden, gave some directions to him, that he might, without appearing purposely to do it, give his daughter time to recover from the agitation he had thrown her into.

MONTFORT did not think that Dumain had so strong an interest in the heart of Matilda, as it now appeared to him that he had. He blamed himself for having afforded them so many opportunities of being together, and of

cultivating a passion, that it was impossible could ever be crowned with their union, even if Dumain should recover from his illness; but this, from the account his father had given of him, was very uncertain.

After Dumain had parted from Montfort and Matilda, on the morning that he took leave of them, he returned home, to prepare for his journey, which he had concluded upon commencing the next morning. So violently was his frame agitated by parting, perhaps for ever, with the object of his adoration, and that frame previously weakened by anxiety and distress of mind, that he had scarcely strength to support himself down the hill into the valley.—At length, he reached home; he went slowly into the cottage, his knees tot-

tering under him; a dead weight lay upon his heart; a deathlike sickness overwhelmed him; objects danced before his eyes; his brain turned round, and he fell motionless into his father's arms. He was conveyed to bed, and, passing a night without sleep, he was the next day delirious, his fever being so high, as to cause it necessary to have persons to hold him down in bed. He was in this situation, when Montfort met his father in the valley.

MATILDA had retired from the parlour, as soon as her father gave her an opportunity, by talking through the window with Jacques, and went out into the air. She directed her steps, without thinking where she was going, to her favourite bowery walk on the hill side, where she had last parted from Dumain. The

scene brought to her recollection the many cheerful, happy hours she had spent there, often in the presence of Dumain, from whom she was now separated for ever, she feared. For, if he escaped the grim tyrant's grasp, which her fears told her was doubtful, her father had placed an insuperable obstacle to their love, by declaring it impossible that their union could ever take place.

The shady walks which she used to delight in, had lost their attraction; the tuneful warblers of the groves, to her ear, had lost their harmony; the distant prospects, the rising hill, and embroidered vale, with the murmuring stream that rippled through it, had lost their beauty. She felt uneasy, and hastened back to the cottage, to solace her mind with the soft tones of her dulcet lute;

even music had not power to charm away the gloom and melancholy that hung upon her soul.

MONTFORT in the course of the evening called to inquire after Dumain; he found he was still delirious, calling upon the name of Matilda incessantly. He continued in this state the whole of that night, and the next morning had every appearance of approaching dissolution, which was almost momentarily looked for by his friends and attendants.

MONTFORT had a great opinion of the skill and medical abilities of the physician who had attended him, after the wounds that he had received in the attack upon his life, had been so ill treated, as to bring on a dangerous

fever. He sent Jacques that evening for him, and he arrived the next day, at a time that it was not expected Dumain could survive many minutes.

He went into the sick man's chamber, and after feeling his pulse, and making the necessary inquiries from his attendants, declared that he had hopes. He said the low state that he was in, was owing to the violence of the disease having nearly exhausted nature, yet, he perceived symptoms, that warranted him to indulge in hopes of a favourable issue.

In a short time after the medicines that he ordered had been administered, they began to operate in as favourable a way as he could wish; and when he left his patient at night, he was consi-

derably better than he was in the morning. The next day he was still better, and in a little time was pronounced out of danger. He soon after was able to leave his bed, when he gained strength fast, so as to be able to walk in the air, which recruited his health so much, that he began to think of putting his intended journey into execution; but that, the physician would not allow, until he had perfectly recovered his strength; as, he said, should he in any manner overfatigue himself, it might cause a relapse; and, not having vigour to encounter it, it might, as in all probability it would, prove fatal.

TIME hung heavy on Dumain's hands; he sighed to be in Matilda's company, but Montfort did not ask him to the cottage. He frequently sat hours to-

gether in her favourite bower, in anxious expectation of seeing her; sometimes, breathing sweet music from his melodious flute; at others, drawing a perspective view of the surrounding scene—the cloud-capt top of the distant rugged hill, of joyless sight; its variegated sloping sides, speckled with woolly flocks; the vale beneath, with the translucent rivulet meandering o'er its rocky bed; the meads, in nature's richest verdure clothed. Here, the ruddy milk-maid—picture of health—with pail well poised upon her head, and kimbo arms, carrying her store to the shaded lactary; there, the sturdy husbandman, driving along his horned team; at a distance, the once stately castle, now mouldering into ruins, surrounded by branching elms and stately pines; and the humble white-walled

cottage, overtopped with towering poplars and spreading planes; the earth's bosom, as far as the eye could extend its sight, diversified with various hues—the verdant lawn, dotted with daisies pied, the moss-grown bank, and purple heath.

He was one evening employing himself in drawing a landscape from nature, when, lifting up his head, he saw Matilda ascending the brow. It was the first time he had seen her since his illness; his hand shook, it refused to guide his pencil, and it fell upon the ground. She approached the spot where he was, without perceiving him, and was passing by it.

He said, "Matilda!—won't you "speak to me, Matilda?"

Not expecting to see him, she screamed with surprise.

" Does my presence alarm you?" said Dumain. " If it does, I will has-
" ten away, and leave you; though I
" should leave my life behind me. O!
" say not, Matilda, that my presence is
" hateful to you."

" No, Dumain, I can never speak a
" language that is foreign to my heart," said she; " believe me, that I rejoice to
" see you; rejoice that you are reco-
" vered from your illness. Believe me,
" Dumain, you have not a friend that
" more anxiously wished it."

" O! Matilda," said he, " you are
" all goodness! How can I ever deserve
" such unmerited condescension? Oh!

" fate, fate, why hast thou interposed
" betwixt happ ness and me? Matilda,
" withdraw not the interest you have
" acknowledged you feel for the
" wretched Dumain, when I say that
" I love you, I adore you, more than
" ever man did woman; and yet, in the
" same instant, tell you I never can offer
" you my hand. But here, I swear,
" by all that man holds sacred, that
" this hand shall never be another's.
" No, Matilda, though I am forbidden
" to offer myself to you, I will never be
" another's.—Another's! where shall
" another Matilda be found?"

They saw Montfort at the foot of the brow, as if waiting for his daughter; they descended together, and met him. He asked Dumain to spend the evening with them, which he readily

consented to. After supper, he accompanied Matilda on the lute, with his German flute, and he appeared with his former cheerfulness and gaiety. Montfort also, for he had a real affection for Dumain, seemed, in partaking of the happiness of the evening, to have forgot the cause of the melancholy he laboured under. They were so well pleased with the company of each other, that the young ones did not think of the fleeting hours, and they were gently reminded by Montfort that it was time to part.

CHAPTER IX.

Great minds, like Heaven, are pleas'd with doing good.

ROWE.

SINCE Matilda had seen Dumain, and found that his health was recovering fast its former state, her spirits returned to her, and she resumed her usual cheerfulness, to the great joy of her fond father, who began to be uneasy at the settled melancholy that seemed to have taken possession of her mind.

THEY frequently walked in the valley, and on the rising hill, as they had used to do, sometimes joined by Dumain, who would accompany them in their ramble.

ONE evening, they were met by a decent looking old woman, who, addressing herself to Montfort, told him that she was in great trouble, her husband lying ill in bed, having lost the use of his limbs; that she had no money to pay the rent of the little hovel they inhabited, and the Marquis's steward had threatened to turn them out; and, to complete their wretchedness, their little cow, their all, that used to supply them with milk, which, with a little bread, was their daily food, had died last night; the old woman ended her pitiable tale with a flood of tears.

MONTFORT, whose heart was ever open to distress and woe, after inquiring of the woman where her hovel was situated, told her he would go along with her, and see what could be done towards softening the heart of the steward. He then desired Dumain to see Matilda safe to the cottage, and he would return, as soon as he had visited the poor sick man. He accompanied the old woman, and the young couple proceeded towards the cottage.

As Dumain and Matilda were passing under the walls of the castle of Saint Aubyn, "There is something awfully "grand in this old building," said the latter, "yet, I can never approach it, "without feeling a degree of fear that "I cannot account for."

" THERE is a mystery about this cas-
" tle" said Dumain, " that I cannot un-
" ravel."

" WAS it not burnt down several
" times," asked Matilda, " without any
" one being able rationally to account
" for the fire?"

" ONE of the towers that the Marquis
" had repaired, was destroyed by fire
" three times," said he, " which cir-
" cumstance is attached to the mystery
" of the castle. I have some reason
" to think, that my father is acquainted
" with something concerning it; but,
" whenever I have made any inquiries
" from him, he has always checked me,
" and turned the subject of discourse."

THEY now approached the cottage,

and were descending the bowery hill side, Matilda's favourite retreat, many of the little shrubs on which, were planted and nurtured by her hand. One of them had fallen from the green painted stick that had supported it, and was lying on the ground, the flowers of which were beaten off, and the leaves broken by the wind's rough blast.

" Ah! see," said Dumain, " the em-
" blem of man," as he was assisting Matilda to tie it up; " our infancy is
" trained and supported by our parents'
" tender care and anxiety; we approach
" the age of manhood, when we are
" impatient of restraint, and burst from
" their trammels, without a monitor to
" guide us; beat and battered by the
" storms of life, bereft of bloom, bereft
" of health, like this poor plant; happy

" if we meet with a kind fostering hand
" to afford us help and succour, like the
" object of Matilda's care!"

" You are turning moralist, Dumain," said she.

" Pardon me, Matilda," he replied, " but I cannot help being grave at " times, when I think, that, ere long, " the happiness that I now enjoy, can " only be had in recollection. When " I am distant far; when you look upon " this plant, will you sometimes think " of the forlorn Dumain, who, like it, " has been beaten by the wind of fate; " but, unlike it, unhappily, has not the " fair, the fostering hand of the kind " Matilda, to bring him back to his for- " mer peace, and former happiness?"

" I HOPE and trust," said she, " that " there are many years of happiness yet " in store for you."

" O! NAME not happiness; I shall ne- " ver taste of happiness without Matil- " da; and, O wretchedness! her I can " never have; so has imperious fate de- " creed."

THEY had got into an interesting conversation, which they might have continued much longer, had they not been obliged to make the best of their way to the cottage, to avoid the effects of a heavy shower of rain, which began to fall thick upon them; and, from the appearance of the gathering clouds, they saw a storm of violence was approaching.

THE turn the conversation had taken,

had imparted to both their minds a seriousness that unfitted them for pursuing a more lively one, and they amused themselves with music—sweet solace of melancholy and distress.

In the mean while, Montfort, after relieving the trouble of the old woman, by extricating her from the misery of want, and securing her in the possession of her hut, in which she and her husband lived, was returning home to the cottage, when he was overtaken by the same shower of rain that had driven Dumain and Matilda from the bower. He was at that time passing the castle of Saint Aubyn, into which he went for shelter. The rain continuing with great violence, he could not leave it, before the black veil of night had totally obscured the light of day, and reigned

with uncontrouled sway over nature's vast expanse. The tempest beat against the mouldering walls, and shook them to their foundation. Night crept on apace, but no abatement of the driving storm. The distant clock struck twelve. He thought he heard a sound like that of a human voice, which was followed by a deep loud groan; and he saw a pale blue flame, gliding gently along a vaulted passage, in the opposite tower to that he was in, and from which also the voice and the groan seemed to issue. The light suddenly disappeared, and immediately the deep groan was repeated, which was lost in the dismal howling of the tempest, which continued with increased force. The wind blew in terrible gusts; the rain descended in torrents; the vivid lightning flashed, darting its forked fire; the thun-

der rolled awfully tremendous, and broke with a crash that seemed to have rent the castle in twain, from the top to its base. He listened attentively, in the intervals between the gusts of wind, but did not hear either the voice or the groan repeated. Another flash of lightning, more vivid and of longer duration than any before, illuminated the gloomy pile, and shewed him a figure, walking slowly along a passage, near the place where he was. He followed it a little distance, when, impervious darkness again succeeding, he lost it, and could not tell which way it went.

He continued some time after the storm had abated, in expectation of seeing the figure again, or of hearing the voice; by which he hoped to have been able to account for these extraordinary

circumstances; but in vain; all remained quiet, nor did the figure again make its appearance.

The moon being now risen, shedding her silver beams around, he left the castle. He was lost in wonder and amazement at what he had seen and heard this night. He did not doubt, from the skeleton which he had before found, being in the situation and position that it was, that murder had been committed there; but that could have nothing to do with the appearance of the figure he had seen, and with the groan he had heard, without giving in to the vulgar belief of the ghosts of murdered persons rising, and haunting the place, where their bones lie unburied; which was an idea he had always scouted, but which he now was almost ready to subscribe to

the truth of. He could not think of any rational way of accounting for these mysteries, and was obliged to submit, at present, to ignorance, in hopes that time would unravel all.

CHAPTER X.

What dang'rous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo?

SHAKESPEAR.

MONTFORT was one morning walking in the garden, where he was joined by Matilda, who came to call him in to breakfast. As they were in that part of it which overlooked the road, a party on horseback, attended by servants, rode by. One of the foremost, who seemed

to be of some rank, stopped his horse, for a moment, and looked, with a degree of curiosity, at Montfort and his daughter, then passed on with the rest of the party.

MATILDA could perceive that her father was unusually agitated; he ate no breakfast, and seemed absorbed in thought; he rose from table, and retired to his study, which he did not leave till he was called to dinner. He ate little now, and that little seemed to be forced by his efforts, against his inclination. He spoke seldom, and in a manner that plainly shewed his bosom was rent with uneasiness. He had not shewed such symptoms of disquietude, since they had resided at the cottage. As soon as the cloth was drawn, he again retired to his study.

MATILDA could not account for this sudden change in her father, which made her very unhappy; she had hoped that he had, in a great measure, got the better of his gloom and melancholy, as he had latterly been more cheerful than ever she knew him, but his distress of mind seemed to have returned with ten-fold force. She longed to be made partaker of his sorrow, that she might endeavour to find some method of alleviating it; but she would not make any inquiry from him of the cause, as he had, in such a peremptory manner, charged her to refrain from curiosity on that subject.

IN the evening, she played on her lute several airs, that she knew he was partial to; but music had no effect in

rousing him from his heaviness of mind, and he soon retired to his chamber. The next day, he appeared no better, neither eating or conversing in his usual manner. This gloomy state of his mind continued for some days; at length, it gradually wore off, and he recovered his former serenity.

DUMAIN's health being now sufficiently re-established for him to undertake his journey, he had determined to set off in the course of a day or two. He called at the cottage, to bid a reluctant farewell to Matilda and her father, when he was informed, that Montfort had been gone out some time, but that Matilda was in the garden.

HE went in search of her, with a

heavy heart, but she was not there; he then ascended the bowery brow, and at a distance saw her standing in a thoughtful mood. He came up to her unperceived, and found her eyes attentively fixed upon the shrub that he had assisted her in tying up; and on her finger was perched a favourite bull-finch. As she stooped to put her hand to the plant, he could perceive her snow-white bosom heave with a sigh.

" O!" CRIED he to himself, " how " happy I should be, if I knew Dumain " was thought of in that sigh! yet, why " should I wish it; why should I wish " to have Matilda as unhappy as my- " self, in encouraging a passion that " never can be consummated? No, ra- " ther let me wish she hated me, than " that her gentle bosom should know

" one moment's disquiet on my ac-
" count.—Hate me! Good God! could
" I bear to be hated by Matilda Mont-
" fort?"

A DEEP and involuntary sigh escaped from his breast, and discovered to Matilda that he was there. A crimson blush overspread her damask cheek, and, beautiful as he had always thought her, he never thought her equal to what she then appeared.

" I OUGHT to apologize, Matilda, for
" breaking in on your contemplation,"
said he, " but I hope the cause, melan-
" choly as it is to me, will plead my ex-
" cuse."

" GOOD heaven! What do you mean?"
said Matilda.

" I HAVE been at the cottage, and, " being disappointed in finding you " there, I came to seek you here," continued he; " will you forgive me for " disturbing you?"

" FORGIVE you, Dumain?" she said, " what need of forgiveness, where no " offence is committed? Yet, I have " cause to be offended with you too."

" O! HEAVEN forbid that ever Du- " main should give Matilda cause for " offence," cried he, interrupting her.

" IT is for making such a formal apo- " logy, and calling my absence from the " cottage, the melancholy cause of your " being here; I declare you frightened " me; I thought something melancholy, " in reality, had happened."

" I COME, Matilda, to take leave of " you, previous to beginning my long " intended journey, which is to me " melancholy indeed; to bid you fare- " well, perhaps, for ever, and, with you, " a lasting farewell to happiness."

" WHY will you indulge these gloomy " ideas, Dumain?" said she. " Hap- " piness and you, I trust, will long be " friends. I hope I shall see you re- " turn with renovated health, with re- " novated spirits, gay and cheerful, in " full possession of the happiness you " used to enjoy."

" NEVER, never," exclaimed he, with a deep sigh.

" WHEN do you purpose setting out?" asked Matilda.

" To-morrow morning," he replied.

" Indeed, so soon?" she said; a sigh stealing from her heaving bosom, the parent to a blush that suffused her lovely cheek, which was succeeded by a death-like paleness, that denoted she was not indifferent to the information she received.

" You are not well, Matilda," said Dumain.

" I see my father coming up the hill; " we will meet him," was the reply she made.

By the time Montfort and they met, she had recovered herself from the flutter she had been put into, by the infor-

mation of Dumain's intention of so sudden a departure. He mentioned his purpose of leaving the valley the next morning early, to commence his journey, when Montfort requested him to spend that evening at the cottage. He readily accepted the invitation, and they turned back, to descend the brow into the garden.

As they were walking along, Matilda, wrapt in thought, had loosed the little ribbon by which she held her feathered captive, and he flew from her hand. She uttered a scream of sorrow, at the loss of her favourite bird, which had perched upon a hawthorn, that overhung a craggy bank, of steep descent. —Dumain ran towards the spot, and caught hold of the ribbon; at the same

time, the ground giving way under his feet, he was precipitated to the bottom, a fall of some yards. He retained hold of the ribbon, and brought the bird to Matilda, who expressed her thanks to him; but said, dearly as she loved the bird, she would rather have lost it a thousand times, than he should have run such a risk.

Montfort perceived that Dumain could not walk without difficulty, and feared that he was much bruised.—When they arrived at the cottage, he complained of a soreness of the whole of the side on which he had fallen; as he grew cool it increased, with a stiffness in his limbs, that prevented him using them. He was put to bed, and a surgeon sent for, who said that

he was considerably bruised, but he hoped, that being plentifully blooded, and the use of some fomentations, that he would send, would prevent any subsequent danger ensuing. He was, however, confined to his bed for some days, before he could be moved, and to his chamber for some weeks.

Montfort left no amusement untried, to render less irksome Dumain's confinement, conscious that his anxiousness to serve his daughter, in the recovery of her fugitive bird, was the cause of what he suffered. He was, at length, able to be moved, during the day, into another room. The gratification he now experienced, in the beloved company of his adored Matilda, much more than repaid him, for all the pain he had un-

dergone from his fall; and his only fear was, that he should get well too soon, and too soon be debarred the happiness he now enjoyed.

He was, once more, able to breathe the German flute, and they had a little concert every evening, Montfort accompanying them on the violin, on which instrument he was a proficient; Matilda lending the aid of her charming voice, made the harmony delightful.

Chess was an amusement that Montfort was very fond of, and Dumain being an excellent player, much of their time, that was not spent in music, was passed at that game. Matilda would sometimes take her father's place at the chess board, and play an hour or two with

the invalid, who almost thought that he was in paradise, where he would have been content to have continued, even at the expence of the bodily inconvenience he endured.

CHAPTER XI.

There is a kind of character in thy life
That, to the observer, doth thy history
Fully unfold.

SHAKESPEAR.

DURING the time of Dumain's confinement at the cottage, happened one of the periodical days, on which twelve little girls, the children of poor cottagers in the valley, who were educated and clothed at Matilda's expence, brought their month's work for her to inspect; and brought their books also, that she might judge of the progress they had made in their learning. She

examined them all singly, praising those whose attention and industry deserved it; and exciting a spirit of emulation in those who appeared to be backward, either through want of application, or diffidence in their own abilities, spurring them to the utmost exertion of the first, and bringing the latter into use, where they only lay dormant in the breast, for want of some genial hand to draw them forth. After exhorting them to be good girls, and, above all things, after the worship of their Heavenly Father, to be dutiful to their parents, she gave each a small piece of money.

"Excellent Matilda!" ejaculated Dumain.

The little children's bright eyes, lifted up, with native innocence, to the face

of their lovely patroness, smiling joy and beaming gratitude, seemed, in eloquent silence, to repeat, "Excellent "Matilda!"

She then asked them, separately, after the health of their parents, and about little local circumstances, that drew from their artless lips answers of truth and innocence.

To one she said, "How are your fa-"ther and mother, Jennett?"

"My father has hurt his leg with an "axe, Mademoiselle," said she, "and "cannot work; and that makes my "mother cry, and be ill, because she "can't get meat for my brothers and "sisters; but I will give her this mo-"ney, and that will buy some."

" And do you really mean to give it " to her?" said Matilda.

" Yes, Mademoiselle," answered the little girl.

" You are a good child," said the former; " but you may keep that your- " self, and I will try if I cannot get " some more for your mother."

" But I will give her this to keep, " for fear you should not be able to get " any more," said the artless child.

" Well, my dear, if I should not be " able to get what I wish, you may " give your mother your's."

As she dismissed her little flock, Du-

main could not help emphatically repeating, " Excellent Matilda !"

JUST at that moment Montfort came in, when Matilda told him of the misfortune that Jennett's father had met with, and of the consequent distress of his family.

" HERE, my dear," said he, giving her a purse, " go, and see the poor peo-
" ple, and if you can relieve them, do.
" In the mean time, Dumain and I will
" have a game at chess."

MATILDA quickly put on her things, and was soon down the valley, at the cottage of the poor man. She found his wife, the picture of despair, wringing her hands, and crying o'er her helpless infants, as they gasped for bread;

the father lying stretched in agonizing pain and sickness; straw his bed, and a thin spare sheet his only covering. His ghastly looks, his hollow eyes, and sunken cheeks, proclaimed misery and want. Poverty and need reigned throughout this pitiable abode of wretchedness.—His coarse straw bed, and a three-legged stool, were the only articles of furniture the hut contained, the rest having been sold, to meet the craving wants of nature.

MATILDA emptied the contents of a little basket she had brought, and spread before their longing eyes, some dressed meat and a loaf of bread, with a flask of generous wine to cheer their drooping hearts. She had the satifaction, before she left them, to find that her charitable efforts were crowned

with success, in the relief they afforded; even, the poor sick man, when he saw his children with eager joy satisfying their gnawing wants, and no longer heard their piercing cries of distress, beamed a faint smile of heartfelt gratitude—all the thanks he had to pay.—After leaving some of the money her father had given her, with the mother of this poor family, to buy some necessary articles of furniture, she departed, first telling her, that she should pay her another visit the next day.

Montfort and Dumain were still at chess, when Matilda got back to the cottage. She related the wretched situation in which she found the poor family she had been to visit; and told her father what she had done, who expressed his perfect approbation. What were

Dumain's ideas, even, a slight observer might easily have perceived, by his eyes, as they gazed on Matilda; which shewed, more eloquently than words, what passed in his heart.

" We must go on with our work, my " dear," said Montfort, " and complete " what we have begun for this poor " family; we must not leave them " till the father is again able to follow " his occupation, to support his chil- " dren, and keep them from starving; " it is a work well suited to your incli- " nation, and I leave the management " of it to you, Matilda."

" Thank you, my dear father," said she, " and I will undertake it most " cheerfully, since you have already am- " ply furnished me with the means."

THE next day, Matilda again visited the poor man and his family, and found the hut in a more confortable state, having got some better bedding for him to lie on, with a table and some chairs; which, with the improved looks of the good woman and her young ones, as well as the serenity of mind that now appeared in the sick man's countenance, displayed an air of ease and comfort, which afforded as much pleasure to their benefactress, in being the instrument, as to them in the enjoyment, of it.

MATILDA called upon them almost every day, till the poor man had recovered from his hurt, and was again able to work. Whenever he, or his wife, met or saw Matilda, they invoked Heaven to pour down its blessings upon her, for rescuing him from a premature

grave, and for being the means of saving his children from perishing through want. It is always pleasing to meet with gratitude, and Matilda received their thanks with satisfaction. But she looked for, and enjoyed, payment of a more exalted nature, for her benevolence and charity—the smiles of an approving conscience—which, whilst it told her she had done her duty, told her she had done no more.

To many of these scenes of charity and philanthropy Dumain was witness, whilst he remained an invalid at the cottage, and it was evident to him, that many more were exercised in secret.

He was now nearly recovered from his bruises, and was enabled to take short walks with Montfort and his

daughter. The manner in which they were met by their poor neighbours, who called upon the Almighty to shower down his blessings upon them, as they passed, convinced him that it was by acts of the nature he had lately witnessed, that they had rendered themselves so deservedly beloved, and almost adored.

The more Dumain saw of Matilda, the more he felt the necessity, however reluctantly, of separating himself from her. He had been sufficiently well for some time, to begin his journey, but he had not the courage to say, "farewell." Not having any further pretext to prolong his stay at the cottage, he was now, however, resolved to put in execution his long-determined project, and to set out the next day.

THE many excellent qualities that Dumain possessed, had so endeared him to Montfort, that it was with reluctance he could bring himself to part with him. But when he recollected, what could not escape the observation of any one, the evident partiality that his daughter and he had for each other, he no longer hesitated.

AFTER passing the evening in the usual manner, in amusing themselves and each other with their little concert, Dumain took his leave of Matilda and her father, together. He chose this method of parting, as he felt that he could not venture himself alone with the former, without betraying himself, and causing uneasiness to her. Montfort inquired which way he meant to travel, but he declared that he had not

thought of any particular route; that his object being the restoration of his health, and having only that in view, he did not mean to confine himself to any plan, but to travel how, and where, convenience, and particular circumstances, might point out.

He left the parlour with a heavy heart; he had bidden farewell to Matilda; perhaps, a last farewell; he had just seen her, for the last time, possibly. He got into his chamber, and threw himself on the bed, but sleep was foreign to his eyes. After a restless night he arose, and left the cottage. He travelled the whole of that day without stopping, and at night was many miles distant.

Matilda could not avoid discover-

ing, by the depression of mind she laboured under, for some time after Dumain's departure, how great an interest he had in her heart. Montfort, too, had enjoyed his company so long, that he was sensibly affected at the deprivation of it.

CHAPTER XII.

Hung round the bowers, and fondly look'd their last.

GOLDSMITH.

DURING the time that Dumain had been confined at the cottage, Montfort went very little out. He was induced to this from a double motive, the attention that he conceived due to his guest, and the sense of the impropriety of his daughter and him being together too much, without his presence; by which,

a passion that he saw raged with violence in the heart of Dumain, and was gaining strength fast in that of Matilda, might rise to such a height, that the utmost effort of resolution would not be able to subdue it. He now, however, went on his distant walks as usual; sometimes visiting the castle of Saint Aubyn; sometimes mounting the rising hill, or ranging through the flower-fringed vale.

After one of these excursions, he came home uncommonly heated, as if from great exertion in walking, and seemed unusually gloomy and grave. He did not leave the cottage the next day, but kept retired in his study. The day after, a servant rode up to the door, which Montfort observing, called Alice, and, after talking with her, ordered her

to open it. The servant stopped in conversation with her a few minutes, and then rode away; after which, she went into the study to Montfort, with whom she was closeted for upwards of an hour, Jacques being employed in the garden.

Montfort's gloom and melancholy now returned upon him, and he constantly appeared lost in thought. Deep sighs, as formerly, would break forth from his agitated bosom, and he would pace the room with a now slow, now hurried, uneven gait. This state of his mind continued, without any abatement of its violence. He would, however, at times, leave the cottage for an hour or two, but generally avoided the valley, going through the garden; and, ascending Matilda's favourite bower,

would walk for hours upon the hill above. Here she would frequently accompany him, and, whilst he extended his walk, would sit in contemplative silence, on a moss-grown bank, or employ herself in nursing the plant that Dumain had assisted her in tying to the stick that supported it; her feathered pet that he had recovered for her when he received his fall, being her constant attendant.

One evening, her father not having returned to her at his usual time, she ascended the slow-rising hill to look for him; but, though the prospect was open to her for a considerable distance, she could no where behold him. The sun began to draw fast towards the western horizon, darting his setting rays, with refulgent brightness, on the

many-coloured bosom of the earth. There, upon the rugged side of the distant hill, whose top was wrapt in clouds; here, upon the fruitful vale, along whose bottom murmured the translucent rill; there, on the verdant meads, studded o'er with the rich cowslip, and lily white; upon the barren moor of russet hue; upon the close-nipt lawn, spotted with the silver fleece; now, playing upon the chrystal surface of the flowery lake; now, upon the forest foliage of various tints, the pale ash, the light coloured plane, the dark-leaved oak,—the majesty of trees,—whose lengthening shadows, stretching to the east, proclaimed the quick approach of night.

MATILDA, looking round, as far as the eye could reach, and not being able

to see any thing of her father, was returning towards the cottage, and had nearly got to the verge of the hill, leading into the bower, when she found herself rudely seized by the arm, by a man who had concealed himself in a clump of ever-green shrubs, out of which he rushed, as she was passing. She gave a loud scream, which fortunately reached the ears of Jacques, as he was ascending the brow, in search of her, having been sent by his master, who had got back to the cottage by another route. He ran with all his speed, to the place from whence the noise proceeded and saw her struggling with a man, who was endeavouring to force her along with him. Jacques, with one blow well directed, laid him upon the ground, and conducted his young mistress in safety to the cottage, leaving

the rude assailant measuring his length upon the turf.

AFTER she had informed her father of the escape she had had, he sent for Jacques into his study, who remained with him a considerable time; he then went, by Montfort's order, to see if the ruffian who had assaulted his daughter, remained in the state he had left him. When Jacques arrived at the spot, he found a quantity of blood lying upon the ground, which had fallen from the villain, but no signs of any human being appeared.

MONTFORT's melancholy had seemed to increase every day, for some time past; this second attempt on his daughter did not serve to allay it, but added force to his already too strongly rooted

distress. He was employed all evening writing letters, and, after supper, said, that he had some urgent business, that called him to Paris; that the letters he had been writing, were to a lady, a former acquaintance of his, who lived at some distance from the cottage, who had, frequently expressed a wish that Matilda might spend a few weeks with her. He said, he would send Jacques in the morning with the letters, which were to inform her, that he would now let his daughter accept her invitation, and pass the time with her that he should be absent at the capital.

Jacques was dispatched early the next morning; and, in due time, returned with an answer, that the Countess Villeroy would be happy to re-

ceive Montfort and his daughter, and to keep the latter at the castle, as long as she could make it convenient or agreeable to stay.

They now prepared for their journey, and, in two days, Montfort had arranged his matters, and was ready to set out. Matilda being also ready, the next morning was the time fixed upon for their departure.

She could not think of leaving the vale, where she had spent so many happy hours, without unfeigned regret; but she hoped, that her absence would be but of short duration, as her father had told her, he did not expect to be detained at Paris long. The day before they left the cottage, she went down the valley, to visit the little seminary

she had established, and to leave the objects of her bounty and benevolence, in a state in which they could not suffer, if her absence should be protracted beyond the time she had at present reason to expect.

The next morning early, they got into the *cabriolet*, and departed from the cottage. As they passed down the valley, their poor neighbours lined the road, invoking blessings from above upon them, and praying for their quick return. Among the rest that assembled, were her children, as she called them, who stood curtsying as they went by, their little brimful eyes shewing the pleasure and gratitude they felt at the sight of their benefactress.

As they rode along the valley, Matil-

da often turned her head to look at the cottage, and the tufted bower behind it, on the slope of the gently-rising hill, where she had so frequently passed her hours in calm and peaceful innocence. She could fancy she heard the gentle murmur of the rippling stream, that ran along its base: nor was the dulcet sound of Dumain's flute absent from her thoughts; or the shrubby plant he had assisted her in fastening to its support; or the tremendous fall he got, in pursuing in its flight her little fugitive bird, which was now her companion in the carriage; nor did she forget the many happy hours that fall occasioned, in the uninterrupted conversation of the sick Dumain.

They now came to, and wound round, the projecting brow of a curving

mountain, and lost sight of the cottage and the bower; and, after rising its barren side, and reaching its summit, desended again, losing sight of the valley altogether.

CHAPTER XIII.

Cast o'er yon trackless waste thy wond'ring eye.

OGILVIE.

As they receded from the valley, Montfort's spirits improved; but he did not say any thing of the motive of his journey to Paris, nor did Matilda, fearful of giving him uneasiness, make any inquiry concerning it. She contented herself with indulging the hope her father had inspired, that his stay there

would not be long, and that her absence from the cottage would not exceed the time of his return. The interval, she was fearful, would feel tedious to her, both on account of the want of her father's conversation, which she had been so long accustomed to, and which she always listened to with filial delight; and from her wish to return to the rural scenes she had just left.

At length, they came in sight of Villeroy Castle; as they approached it, Montfort said, "You will find the "Countess Villeroy a charming wo-"man, my dear; if I could bear to be "without the society of my dearest "child, I don't know that woman un-"der whose protection I would so soon "place her."

The carriage stopped at the castle gates, and they alighted at the great hall door; they were shewn into a superb apartment, such as Matilda had never before seen. The Countess soon made her appearance, and received Montfort with every demonstration of sincere regard. He introduced his daughter, who was received in the same kind manner, which stamped on her tender heart a veneration and regard for her noble hostess, even at the first interview.

In the appearance of the Countess Villeroy, there was a degree of majesty, which was softened by a benignity of countenance and easiness of manners, which were sure to attract the attention and the admiration of all who had the happiness and honour of being num-

bered among her acquaintance. She was considerably above sixty years of age, and enjoyed as good health as most people at that advanced time of life do. She was cheerful in her disposition, and possessed a heart in which was stored benevolence and philanthropy.

Villeroy Castle was an ancient building, of hewn stone, of great extent, and of great magnificence. It had been the residence of the Counts Villeroy, for near two centuries back, the present possessor being the widow of the last Count. It was situated at the edge of a large forest, upon a gently-rising ground, surrounded by a close-growing wood, coeval with the building, in which were vistas formed, that opened to different views. Through

this were seen the rugged Pyrenean mountains, whose proudly-rising heads were hid in snows. Through that, the distant forest, whose sandy bosom was diversified with the purple erica and the prickly ever-blooming gorse. Here, an expanded lake, from which could be seen flowing a gentle stream, which gradually increased to a grand and rapid river, on whose surface rode, with noble pomp, the stately bark, freighted with the vineyard's richest store, and which the eye could trace through distant space, till it was embraced by the Mediterranean sea.

It being late when they arrived at the castle, and Matilda being fatigued with her journey, she was, soon after supper, shewn to her apartment. The room was spacious, and magnificently

furnished; the hangings of the bed, and the curtains to the windows, were of the richest crimson satin, and the covering of the bed of the same coloured velvet; the tapestry was of the finest texture, and of the most precious colours; looking-glasses were placed between the windows, and reached from the lofty ceiling to the floor.

MATILDA viewed every thing with astonishment. She was not only struck with the magnificence that surrounded her, but was also surprised at the free and friendly manner with which they had been received; as she had never, before their sudden visit to the castle, heard her father even mention the Countess. Besides, it appeared strange to her, that a man in his humble sphere of life, should have acquaintance with

one of her dignity and title, and that acquaintance apparently the most intimate.

She awoke in the morning, before the sun had op'd the window of the east; not being inclined to sleep, as soon as he darted his bright rays o'er the misty mountains' heads, she arose, took a book out of the closet adjoining her apartment, and sat down to amuse herself till she should be summoned to breakfast. She had not been seated long, before, turning her eyes to the window, she saw her father and the Countess in earnest conversation, in one of the avenues. Her father, she thought, seemed uncommonly agitated, and the Countess appeared to listen to him with attention, and to reply with animation. She thought it remarkable

that they should be up, and walking at that early hour, and that they should be in such eager discourse; which she could not help feeling some degree of curiosity about, conceiving, as she did, that it in some way related to the mysterious melancholy of her father's mind. However, recollecting how he had reproved her before, for only hinting her wish to be acquainted with the cause, that she might lend her aid to remove the effects of it, she determined not to indulge the wish to seek any farther into it, than he chose to inform her of.

After taking a tender farewell of his daughter, as soon as breakfast was over, Montfort set off for Paris. The Countess, as was her usual custom, retired for some time to her closet; and

Matilda walked, to take a view of the gardens and grounds, which she had yet seen from the windows only.

At the bottom of one of the avenues, she turned into a narrow path, that led to a grove, seated in a sequestered glen, in which was a banqueting house, built in the rotunda form; round which ran a rippling streamlet, the approach being over an arched bridge, that crossed it in front of the building. From the grove, following the meandering course of the transparent brook, she was led through the wood, by narrow paths, till at once a large chrystal lake stopped her progress. Here, sailing on its glassy surface, the anxious fisherman spent hours in throwing, with dexterous art, the well-imitated fly, or casting the

meshy net, more laborious toil, his patience and his labour being crowned, at last, with store of speckled trout and golden tench. From the banks of the lake, she turned into a walk, which brought her into another avenue, that led to the castle, where she found the Countess just leaving her closet.

The carriage was soon after ordered, and they took an airing upon the forest, over which were thinly scattered little straw-roofed cots, the habitations of contented shepherds, who watched all day their woolly charge, and slept at night in innocence and peace. At all of these humble dwellings, as she passed, the Countess stopped, with the most affable condescension, making inquiries after one

who had been ill, and after another whom she had not seen for some time, endearing herself to all.

" You will, perhaps, be surprised, " my dear" said she, " to see one of " my rank make so free with these " humble cottagers; but, though they " are my vassals, dependant upon me, " yet I cannot but feel that they are " fellow creatures; and, as long as they " behave with honesty, and are faithful " to the trust reposed in them, I think " they have a kind of right to my boun- " ty and to my protection."

" Though I have always moved in " a humble sphere, yet I always found," said Matilda, " some lower than my- " self, and some that were wretched

" through poverty and want; and those
" my father always taught me to feel
" for, and to consider as having a claim
" upon me for a part of the superfluity
" I possessed."

" THE precept was worthy your fa-
" ther's heart," said the Countess, " and
" I don't know a man that possesses
" a better. He was always the pride
" of his family; his acquaintance and
" his friendship were sought by all,
" when he mixed more with the world
" than he has done since the melan-
" choly that is so deeply rooted in his
" mind unfitted him for his former pur-
" suits."

MATILDA was in hopes that the Countess would have said something,

by which she might guess at the cause of her father's melancholy; but here the conversation ended, and, soon after, the carriage drove up the avenue to the castle.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is the witness still of excellency,
To put a strange face on his own perfections.

SHAKESPEAR.

THE Countess had an extensive circle of acquaintance, amongst whom she visited very frequently; so that time slipped away imperceptibly with Matilda; and when she had been at Villeroy Castle a month, and looked back, she could scarcely think it possible. There were balls and musical parties;

in the latter of which, the Countess touched the silver strings of the harp, with a masterly hand, bringing out its swelling notes with melodious harmony, whilst Matilda enchanted every ear with the sweetness and extent of her voice, which was a constant theme of admiration, as well as the exquisite judgment with which she managed it. Nor was her elegance less admired in the mazy dance; whether she moved with dignity and grandeur in the minuet's slow steps, or tripped it lightly, with agile toe, to the cotillon's airy tune, she bore away the palm. The Countess was complimented much on the accomplishments of her fair visitor, and took great pleasure in hearing her so much the subject of praise; Matilda herself being the only one who did not appear to be conscious of the superiority she held over

all who visited at the castle, which modesty still added to her charms.

Modesty, the brightest ornament of the polished mind; sweetest charm of female excellence; adored quality, of origin divine; twin sister to heaven-born chastity! Modesty, pleasing to, and admired by all, places the possessor in a station of proud pre-eminence, in every eye but its own. Diffident of its own accomplishments, it is, by the experienced and the discerning, ever courted, ever honoured. Even assurance itself is obliged to allow the meed of praise, and, in its lovely presence, to fall back appalled. All elegance of person, beauty in all its plenitude, bestowed by nature in her profusest mood, must shrink into insignificance, if not disgust, when bereft of the radiant

charms of modesty. Bright, angelic maid, sweet Modesty, hail!

Among the numerous visitors at the castle, were Madame Lunelle and her daughter, who were distant relations of the Countess, and resided at Viviers, from which town Villeroy Castle was only a few miles distant. Elinor Lunelle was about Matilda's age, of a lively disposition, and elegant in her manners, as well as beautiful in her person. They very soon formed an intimacy, which was succeeded by a close friendship. The Countess, perceiving the growing attachment between them, gave Elinor an invitation to make some stay at the castle, which was readily accepted by the latter, to the no small pleasure of Matilda.

THE two young friends would frequently take a morning ramble, over the forest's waste, or in the shady groves around the castle; or, sometimes, trace the velvet banks of the transparent stream, till they found themselves on the margin of the pellucid lake, where they enjoyed the cool breeze, that wafted, in balmy streams, over its crispy surface.

MATILDA, one morning, drew her companion some distance on the forest, to visit one of the little huts, in which a shepherd lived, whose wife was ill, and whom she had before frequently visited. As they were rising a gentle hill that led to the cot, they met a chevalier on horseback, young and handsome. He stopped, and spoke to Elinor, and bowed gracefully to her

friend. Elinor blushed, and appeared agitated. He accompanied them to the shepherd's hut, when Matilda went in, to see the sick woman, and soon rejoined her companion and the chevalier; who, having given his horse to his servant, walked with them to the bottom of the avenue that led to the front entrance of the castle, when he took his leave.

" He is a handsome young man," said Matilda, as they ascended the avenue, " he is an acquaintance of yours, " I suppose, Elinor."

" I have met him sometimes, at a " ball, and I have danced with him," said she, " but have no intimate ac- " quaintance with him."

" AH!" said Matilda, " I perceive " that he occupies a larger space in " your heart than you are willing to " acknowledge; believe me, you may " trust your friend, without any danger " of the secret going farther."

" To be candid with you, Matilda, " I own that the Chevalier Melun has " perfections in my eye, that surpass " those of any other man I ever saw; " but I have never thought of him in " a more serious light than as an in- " different acquaintance, who never " gave me the least cause to suppose " that he entertained the smallest par- " tiality towards me."

" I THANK you for your ingenuous- " ness," said Matilda, " but the blush " that covered your cheek when he

" first met us, told me as much before;
" and, from what little observation I
" had an opportunity of making, you
" are not, I think, altogether so indiffe-
" rent to him as you may imagine."

ELINOR was going to reply, when they saw the Countess approaching.

THEY went to meet her, and found that she had sent a servant to look for them, that they might themselves return an answer to an invitation to a ball at the Countess of G's—" However,
" as you could not be found, I have
" ventured to answer for you in the
" affirmative," said she.

MATILDA then told her, that she had been to see the shepherd's sick wife, accompanied by Elinor, and that

she found her considerably better than when she last saw her.

" DOES she want any thing?" said the Countess.

" I THOUGHT a flask of wine would " be serviceable to the poor woman, " and I took one with me," replied Matilda, " but I don't know that she " wanted any thing else."

" THANK you, my dear; I find that " your heart is, as it should be, open to " charity and alive to distress, and you " cannot oblige me more, than to make " use of any thing the castle affords, " in the exercise of so praise-worthy a " pursuit."

THEY had now walked as far as the

banqueting house, when the Countess, finding herself fatigued, proposed that they should rest themselves there, before they returned to the castle. This building had never been used since Matilda had been with the Countess, and she had never been in the inside of it, although she had very frequently been in the grove in which it was sequestered. They now crossed the bridge, and entered the house, which was comprised of one large cirular room, with a dome ceiling, and a music gallery; and was surrounded with paintings, chiefly portraits, among which was one that Matilda could not keep her eyes off: it was that of a young man, richly dressed in embroidered clothes, which, she thought, had a strong resemblance to her father.

THE Countess, seeing that her attention was fixed upon that portrait, said, " That is the likeness of an ancestor of " mine, and was taken when he was " young; but he has long since been " dead."

" I COULD not help viewing the pic- " ture with a kind of veneration, as " having a striking resemblance to one " who is very near and dear to me," said Matilda.

" YOU mean your father, my dear,' said the Countess. " I have sometimes " thought, that there is a faint like- " ness." After Matilda had examined the rest of the pictures, the Countess having recovered of her fatigue, they returned to the castle.

MATILDA found letters had arrived from her father, by which she was informed, that he had been unexpectedly disappointed by the absence of a person from Paris, whom it was his wish to see; and that he should, owing to that circumstance, be detained some time longer.

THOUGH Matilda found herself happy at the castle in the company of the Countess and of Elinor, and the constant round of gaiety they were in made time fly swiftly away, yet she sometimes sighed when she thought of the cottage, and of the happiness she had experienced there. Sometimes, her thoughts would wander to her shady bower; sometimes, rise the hill above, and then descend into the vale below. Sometimes, her thoughts would trans-

port her to her little seminary of children, wondering how their improvement went on. At other times, she would fancy herself at the close of evening, among the awful, gloomy ruins of Saint Aubyn's castle; then would stray over the meads, among the fleecy charge of the watchful shepherd, till she reached the hill that led her back to her favourite bower, where she would, in idea, stop to view the shrubby plant Dumain and she had fastened to its support; and would then descend into the garden, thinking she heard her father call to her to play a favourite air on her dulcet lute, accompanied by the sweetly-sounding notes of Dumain's German flute. She sometimes indulged in these ideas, but they were quickly dissipated by the enlivening concert's music, or by the merry, gay, fantastic dance; scarcely a

day passing without having visitors at the castle, or visiting some of the neighbouring families.

Madame Lunelle, who had been at the castle for some time, now took leave of her noble relative; after obtaining a promise, that Matilda should pay her a visit at Viviers before long, the Countess fixing the time, when she would accompany her and Elinor, for a few days.

Matilda would have preferred the society of the Countess, and of Elinor, in a more private way, at the castle; but, as she was only a visitor, she did not object to any engagement that was sanctioned by the approbation of her kind and noble patroness; who appeared to take a lively interest in every

thing that could amuse and give pleasure to her lovely guest, for whom she entertained the most sincere affection, which she shewed at every opportunity that occurred, and which bound Matilda still stronger to her than even the kind reception she had at first met with. Every day served to rivet closer the mutual attachment and regard of each other.

CHAPTER XV.

Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay.

COWPER.

THE Countess took Matilda and Elinor to the Countess of G's ball, agreeable to invitation. There was a gay crowd of fashion assembled, to join in the merry dance. The Chevalier Melun was there, and danced with Elinor; the Baron Longuaville led out Matilda.

The Baron was a man of fashion, not only in his dress, his taste in which was generally looked up to, but also in all those acquirements which the licentiousness of the age deemed necessary appendages to a man who moved in the higher circles of life, and which we now should justly style libertinism and debauchery. He was lively and entertaining in his conversation, and was esteemed one of the best dancers of his day. He was handsome and elegant in his person, and had the appearance of a much younger man than he was, being little under forty, but would not be taken to be more than thirty. He was captivated by his partner, whom, after the dancing was over, he led into the supper room, and seated himself by her. He directed the whole of his attention to her, during the remainder

of the evening, and, when the company parted, handed her to the carriage of the Countess; of whom he begged permission to pay his respects to her, and her fair guest, at Villeroy Castle, the next day. The Chevalier handed Elinor to the carriage, and obtained the same permission.

As they drove home, the Countess, addressing herself to Matilda, said, "How do you like the Baron Longua-"ville, my dear?"

"In the short time I have had the "honour of knowing the Baron," said Matilda, "it is not possible for me to "form a just opinion; as far as I am "able to judge, he seems a man of "understanding, and a man of breed-"ing."

" What think you of his person and " manners?" said the Countess.

" His person is certainly handsome," replied Matilda, " and his manners are " elegant, but there appears to me an " officious boldness in him, that I have " never been used to meet with, and " which seems to be the offspring of " self-consequence, and confidence in " his own superior attractions."

The Countess said, " There may be " some little allowance to be made on " that head; he has so long been at the " head of the *beau monde*, and has so " long been accustomed to have his " taste flattered, that he may, insen- " sibly, have acquired a confidence in " himself, which he otherwise might " not have possessed."

" TRUE, Madame; but can it be less " disgusting, because it may be par- " tially accounted for?"

THE carriage now stopped, and prevented the Countess's reply.

THE next morning, whilst Matilda was walking out with Elinor, Baron Longuaville arrived at Villeroy Castle. He was shown into the saloon, and shortly after was joined by the Countess.

AFTER the usual compliments had passed, and he was informed that Matilda was walking in the wood, he said, " Pray, Madame, who is this bright " luminary, that you have introduced, " to steal all our hearts? She is the " most angelic creature I ever saw."

" She is not an angel in her person " only," said the Countess, " but the " beauties of her mind correspond."

" Is her father a Chevalier?" said he.

" Her father," replied the Countess, " moves in a humble sphere of life, " and resides in a distant province, be- " loved and adored by all who know " him."

The Chevalier Melun's name was announced, which prevented the Baron from pursuing his inquiries. As the young ladies were not returned, he proposed to the Chevalier, with the permission of the Countess, to join them in their walk. They saw them at the bottom of one of the long avenues, down which they went to meet them.

As they were approaching at a distance, Matilda said to her companion, "I can't think where I have seen "Baron Longuaville before last night, "but I am certain I must have seen "him somewhere; his person struck "me as one that was familiar to me, "the moment he entered the ball-"room.

The Baron and the Chevalier now joined them, the latter, entering into conversation with Elinor, walked on, and left the Baron and Matilda a considerable distance behind. Excepting some common place compliments to her beauty, which were lost upon her, their discourse chiefly turned upon the entertainment of the last evening. After walking some time, she proposed returning to the castle. As they wound

round the shady bower, in which the banquetting house stood, they were rejoined by Elinor, and the Chevalier.

" We have been looking for you, " Matilda," said the former, " and, not " finding you in any of the walks, we " went into the grove, thinking we " should meet with you in your favour- " ite spot."

" Is the grove a retreat, that you are " partial to?" said the Baron to Matilda.

" I think it very pleasant in the heat " of the day," said she; " and, at " other times, when I have not the hap- " piness of Elinor's company in my " walks, I take a book and sit reading " in it. I am fond of retirement when

" I read, which in that grove I can en-
" joy undisturbed; as, not any noise
" ever approaches it, except the sweet
" notes of the tuneful birds, or the rip-
" pling of the stream that runs through
" it."

HAVING now reached the castle, the Baron and the Chevalier, after paying their respects to the Countess, took their leave; the former of whom, said that he should avail himself of her kindness, in presuming again to pay a visit to her charming *protegée;* to which, the Countess replied, as politeness dictated to her. From this time, the Baron was a frequent visitor at Villeroy Castle, and was very particular in his attention to Matilda, who regarded him with an indifference, that any person, possessed of less confidence than he was, would have

looked upon, as a mark of her disapprobation of his assiduities.

MATILDA mentioned to the Countess, the uneasiness she experienced at the Baron's marked behaviour to her. "Even, if I could bring myself to look "upon him," she said, "as a man with "whom I could pass happily my future "life, which I never can, it is impossi- "ble that he can ever think of one in "so inferior a station to himself, in an "honourable point of view; it would, "therefore, if it meets your approba- "tion, be a great satisfaction to me, "and an ease to my mind, if a stop "could, at once, be put to the particu- "lar attention and assiduity, that he "pays to me."

"I APPROVE your caution, my dear,"

replied the Countess, " and I will take " the first opportunity that presents " itself, to speak to the Baron upon the " subject."

ACCORDINGLY, the next time he came to the castle, she gave orders, that she should be informed of it, before he saw Matilda. She addressed him seriously, and told him that it was impossible not to see, that he paid that attention to her young friend, which denoted that he entertained thoughts concerning her that went beyond those employed on a mere acquaintance. She begged, that he would desist from shewing such particularities to her, as it was, she imagined, impossible he could ever think of marrying a woman, so much below him in point of family and fortune; and, she could not think so dishonourably of

him, as to give way to the supposition that he had any other views: besides, if he had, he must be aware of the insult it would be offering to her, under whose present protection Matilda was.

He owned, that to a common mind, the argument she had made use of, would have great weight; but, he was above the censure of the world, his rank and situation in life being, he thought, a sanction for any step that he might take, to please his own inclination; and, if he thought her charming guest deserving of being his wife, he did not see any right the world had, to call in question the exercise of his own discretion. This reply had the effect it was designed to have, that of lulling the suspicions of the Countess, whilst he the better played a game he had in con-

templation, with the devoted object of his desires.

THE Baron continued his visits at Villeroy Castle, and redoubled his attentions to Matilda, who received them with a cold civility, the effect of the respect she bore for the Countess, which told her, that she ought to behave with politeness to him.

HOWEVER difficult it was to her, to put on a dissembling behaviour, she saw it was now necessary, and she solaced herself with the hope of her father's speedy return from Paris, to put an end to the Baron's persecution of her

CHAPTER XVI.

The richest scen'ry, and the loveliest forms.

COWPER.

THE Baron called one morning at the castle, and found that the Countess and her two young friends, were gone to spend a few days with Madame Lunelle, at Viviers; he followed them, and being previously acquainted with Madame, frequently visited her, and was invited to a ball she gave, to the great

mortification of Matilda, who had hoped to have been freed, at least for a time, from his disagreeable assiduities.

The Baron generally resided upon an estate, in a distant part of the province, and was only occasionally in this neighbourhood, to take the diversion of sporting. The house he had here was situated near the foot of the Cevennes mountains, a country abounding in game of every description; and, being only a hunting box, was too small to accommodate a numerous assembly, which reason he had given as an excuse for not inviting the Countess Villeroy, and her fair guests before. He now, however, issued cards of invitation to a rural masked *fête*, he determined to give in his gardens, which were very extensive, laid out in a style of superior taste

and were well adapted to that purpose. Of course, the party at Madame Lunelle's received cards. Matilda would gladly, if she had known how, have declined the invitation, but it was not possible to be separated from her party, and she was obliged to accept it.

On the appointed evening, the company assembled, habited in motley dresses. Here, one supporting the character of the austere friar, with cowl on head, and hempen girdle round his waist, counting his beads as he walked along; there, a butterfly fop, with spangled coat, and feathered hat, talking his airy nothing in every female ear, that would stop to listen to his empty chat; here, the many-coloured hero, frisking about with agile step, and wielding his sword of lath, shewing his dexterity to

the admiring crowd; there, the Grand Turk, with his high turban'd front, and pellisse of richest texture, inhaling through the friendly tube, the pungent perfume of the Indian herb, emitting from his mouth aspiring clouds of curling smoke. Troops of gay Savoyards mixed with the merry crowd, whilst those, whose active days were past, in dominos attired, stood as spectators to view the busy scene. Matilda was habited as a nun, and Elinor as a lady abbess, attended by chevalier Melun, as father confessor,

In the center of the gardens was a spacious lawn, with an orchestra, erected for the purpose, in the midst of it, filled with musicians, who played on instruments of various kinds—the shrill clarion, the dulcet flute, the deep-toned

organ. From the lawn, on every side, were wide avenues planted with trees of many sorts—the proud cedar, the stately elm, the branching chesnut,—whose meeting tops formed a grove of enchanting beauty, studded with variegated lamps, that seemed to vie in number with the stars, with which heaven's high arch is fretted. The avenues communicated with each other by many winding paths, cut through the thick-growing wood, which were also illuminated with lamps, in pendent clusters, of many colours, placed in great profusion, so that the gardens were a scene of blazing splendor.

In different parts, booths were fixed, where cold meats, with the choicest fruits and wines, were dealt out with a lavish hand, by servants whom the Ba-

ron had placed there for that purpose. —These booths were some of them, formed of the boughs of trees, bent down from the trunk to the ground, and plaited together with full-blowing woodbines, and sweet-scented jessamines intertwined, making a delightful bower of rural simplicity. Others were built of rough-hewn wood, whose sides were covered with moss, and roofs with straw, making, in appearance, the humble shepherd's cot, and giving to the beholder, an idea of the content and peace that usually inhabit those lowly dwellings.

In different parts were clumps of ever-greens, which, with the eglantine, and the blushing rose, lent their assistance to the numerous groves of citrons,

and of oranges, some in bloom, and others with pendent fruit upon their branches, to fill the ambient air with fragrant perfume; the humble pansy, the valley's lily, and the spicy pink, with which the borders were well stored, afforded also their sweet-scented aid.

In one part a fountain played, with a pleasing melancholy murmuring sound, emitting the liquid element in abundant streams, which fell into a reservoir that emptied itself over its rugged margin, into a depth below, forming a cascade of grandeur, and of beauty.

The motley group, in parties traversed the garden's vast extent; sometimes, ranging through the sweet-scented

groves of oranges and of citrons, which, lighted by the lamps of various colours, appeared like enchanted ground; then, visiting the bowered, and cot-like booths, or darting, with agile swiftness, through the winding paths. Whilst some were viewing the rude grandeur of the falling cascade, others were tripping it lightly in fantastic mazes on the velvet lawn, to the music's enlivening sound.

In the midst of these scenes of gaiety, and of mirth, a cry of murder was heard from a distant part of the gardens. The company flew towards the place from whence it proceeded, and saw a man, habited as a capuchin friar, weltering in his blood upon the ground; but, before any of them could get up to him,

he was surrounded by a group of maskers, and borne away. Upon looking round them, they saw at no great distance, a female, habited as a nun, lying senseless on the floor. Melun, and Elinor, who now came up, instantly recognized her to be Matilda. After a considerable time spent in making use of proper applications, she came to herself, and was supported to the Countess's carriage; in which, accompanied by the Chevalier and Elinor, she was conveyed to Madame Lunelle's, where she and the Countess had been some time, having left the Baron's early, and were waiting in expectation of their young friends arriving, before they retired to rest.

This tumult in the gardens, which

put an end to the festivity of the evening, was owing to a rude attack made upon Matilda.

THERE was one of the masks, habited as a capuchin friar, who had haunted her all the evening, never speaking, but, always keeping close to her. She endeavoured to avoid him, by mixing in the most crowded groups, but to no purpose, as he still followed her. She could not help shewing uneasines by her manner, which was observed by a tall elegant young man, in the dress of a hussar, who asked her to dance.—She readily accepted his offer, in hopes that it would relieve her from the intruding friar; and more so, as she thought she knew his voice, which convinced her that he must be some

one of the numerous visitors she had seen at Villeroy Castle, and that, if there should be occasion for it, she might expect the protection of a friend in him.

MATILDA and he joined the dance, and the friar seemed to have given up his pursuit Being rather heated with the exercise, her partner recommended an orange, and a glass of wine to her, which they went to procure at one of the booths; and, just as they were turning into one of the winding paths, as being the nearest road to the lawn, where they meant to resume their dancing, they heard a low voice saying, " That's her, do as I ordered " you," and she was immediately seized by two men. Her partner instantly drew

his sword in her defence. The men, alarmed at the glittering steel, let go their hold, and ran away.

At that moment, the friar again made his appearance, and drawing from under his gown a weapon, attacked the young hussar with great fury, but was soon obliged to give way to superior strength and skill, and fell, covered with wounds, senseless to the earth. The two men who had before fled at the sight of a naked sword, now returned with a number more, all in masks, and bore the body away, the young hussar, at the same time, suddenly disappearing.

It would be naturally imagined, that the Baron, who had shewn such marked

attention to Matilda, would have called upon her the next day, to have expressed his sorrow and concern, at the insult she had met with; but that day, and the next passed without seeing him, or receiving any message of inquiry from him; and, when the Chevalier Melun called upon him, to pay his respects, he was informed that he had set off the morning following the *féte*, for his estate that he usually resided at, at some distance.

MATILDA was in hopes that she should have seen her protector, to have thanked him for the part he acted in her favour, but she was disappointed; she remained ignorant to whom it was, she was so much indebted, conjecture not even lending its aid toward a dis-

covery; nor was it known who the person was in the dress of a friar, who had received from him, the chastisement due to the crime he had committed, or whether he recovered from his wounds or not.

CHAPTER XVII.

My true love is grown to such excess,
I cannot sum up half my sum of wealth.

SHAKESPEAR.

As Matilda, and Elinor, were walking one evening on the banks of the river, they heard, among the rocks, the sound of the german flute, at a small distance from them. Upon listening attentively to the notes, Elinor thought the air that was played, one of the most beautiful she had ever heard, and, expressed her-

self to that effect, adding, " Don't you " think it charming, Matilda?"

" YES," said she, faltering in her voice, and the colour in her cheeks coming and going alternately. At that moment, the Chevalier joined them.

" WE have been listening to a sweet " air, played upon the German flute," said Elinor, " do you know the musi- " cian, Melun?"

" HE is a particular friend of mine," said the Chevalier, " and I have just left " him behind this rock."

THE flute breathed out again its soft notes, and the sound approached them. Matilda was agitated; she recollected in the music, the same air that Dumain

had composed; and which, the last time she heard it, was played by him, on the bowery hill side, behind the cottage.

"My friend is coming this way," said Melun.

Matilda lifted up her eyes, expecting to see Dumain, as, she did not suppose the tune she had heard, could be played by any body but him. It was not Dumain, but a stranger. Matilda felt disappointed.

The Chevalier introduced him by the name of Chatillon, and said, "the ladies "have been admiring the air you play-"ed, Monsieur."

"The ladies do me honour," said he,

bowing, " it is a tune that I have a great " partiality for, not only on account of " the sweetness of the music, but also " in remembrance of him that gave it " me."

" Do I know him?" said the Chevalier.

" I DON'T think you do," replied Chatillon. " I met him at Montpelier, " about a month since, where he went, " like me, for the restoration of his " health. The air perfectly agreed with " me, and I recovered from the effects of " the illness I had experienced, but " poor Dumain received no benefit from " it."

" Does he remain at Montpelier?" stam ered Matilda.

" No, we both left it at the same " time; when I returned home, and he " intended to travel from place to place, " to try what change of air, and climate " would do for him; but I fear much, " that his disorder is too deeply rooted, " for him ever to recover."

THE Chevalier, and Elinor willing to enjoy each other's conversation without interruption, dropped behind; and left Matilda to be escorted home by Monsieur Chatillon.

FROM him she learned, that when he went to Montpellier, he found Dumain there, where he had been some time before; that his health, he thought, was better than when he first saw him, but he seemed to have something, that hung heavy upon his mind, which, he was

fearful, had taken too deep hold upon him, for him to get the better of.

MATILDA endeavoured to check herself, whenever she gave way to the thoughts of the happy hours she had spent in Dumain's society, at the cottage, since it had been declared, both by him, and her father, that fate had placed an insuperable bar to that love being crowned by consummation, which every action of his life, told her he entertained for her; and, which she could not deny, she felt for him. "Yet," she cried to herself, "surely, something "may be allowed to friendship!"

SHE arrived at home, some time before Elinor, who, with the Chevalier had extended their walk, till the purple shade of evening was drawn o'er the

light of day, and nought was heard around, but the nightingale's sweet notes, and the gentle zephyr rustling through the leaves. The pale moon's silver beams, and the music of the melodious vocal chorister of the woods, with the soft whispers of the balmy breeze, attuning the heart to love, Melun poured sweet tales of tender import into the ear of Elinor, who, with chaste and delicate ingenuousness, gave him her promise to be his; owning that he had long been master of her affections. Their conversation, as may be imagined, was more than commonly interesting to them both, and they did not perceive how time passed away. So "silver sweet "sound lover's tongues by night," and so much were their thoughts engaged in pleasing innocent delight, that they were surprised, when they got home, to

find that the supper hour was passed, and that the family was waiting for them.

MADAME Lunelle had invited Monsieur Chatillon to sup with them; the Chevalier, of course stopped. After their repast, the Countess proposed that they should adjourn into the music-room. Matilda took up her lute, whilst Elinor brought out the swelling notes from the harp's harmonious chords, accompanied by Chatillon, on the soft-breathing flute, and by Melun, on the deep-sounding organ. Matilda was desired by the Countess, to sing a favourite air that she mentioned, which she accompanied upon her lute, and performed in her usual masterly style; after which she received the compliments of the party, on the exquisite taste, and

execution she displayed. Chatillon, who was himself a perfect master of music, was quite enraptured. Before they parted, he told Melun, that he thought Matilda was more than human, that it was impossible so much beauty, with the rare accomplishments of the mind she possessed, should be centred in any, under a divine being.

Chatillon became every day more enamoured of her; he was ever forming little parties of pleasure on her account. Sometimes, to sail upon the bosom of the majestic Rhone, whose waves rolling in transparent streams, washed the walls of the town. Here he would breathe soft music from his German flute, sounding more sweet, from the repercussion from the river's lofty rocky banks; whilst Matilda, and

Elinor would alternately touch the strings of the lute, and accompany the music with their charming voice; Melun, at the same time, bringing from the shrill hautboy, the clear and vibrating notes. In the noon-tide heat, they would land on the opposite shore, and range through the bowery woods, sheltered from the sun's scorching rays; and, returning to their barge, as his heat decreased, would glide gently along the stream, and reach the town, as he sunk into the Atlantic Ocean. Sometimes, they would, after sailing down the rolling waves, leave the river to view the antiquities in the neighbourhood;—the ancient amphitheatre at Nismes; and near it, the temple of Diana; and also, *le pont du Guard*, of these tiers of arches; serving as an aqueduct, and

joining the aspiring tops of two rugged mountains; stupendous monument of Roman skill and ingenuity.

Excursions such as these, and many other plans of pleasure, was Chatillon constantly promoting, whose only aim was amusement for Matilda. She saw his intention, and was uneasy at it, as she felt it impossible ever to entertain for him, more than friendship. She wished for an opportunity to present itself, by which she might, with propriety, and without hurting his feelings, put an end to hopes that could never be realized. That opportunity, she saw, could not be forced, and that it could only proceed from him; she, therefore, determined to seize it with avidity, whenever it should offer.

THE Countess Villeroy now signified her intention to return to the castle, and, to take Elinor along with her, as she thought it would be cruel to part Matilda and her, between whom such a disinterested friendship existed. The Chevalier Melun had also a general invitation; which, it is reasonable to supsupose, he would readily avail himself of, to be in the company of the object of his affections.

THE Countess, and her two young friends, left Madame Lunelle, and arrived safe at the castle. Here Matilda found letters for her, from her father; she was disappointed in the contents of them, which she expected would inform her of his intention, speedily to return from Paris; instead of which,

they told her, that the same cause that before delayed him, still existed, and that it might be a month, or perhaps two, or even three, before it was removed.

Although the Countess's kindness, and attention to her were unbounded; and her partiality towards Elinor so great, she could not avoid sighing, when she recollected the cottage, and the charming rural scenes that surrounded it, with the native innocence of the inhabitants of the vale, and the many cheerful hours she had passed there.—She also longed for the valued society of her father, from whom she had never before been parted, even for a day, since she had the power of recollection.—However, she solaced herself with the

idea, that his absence was unavoidable, and that, though the period of its duration, to look forward to, appeared long, yet that time passed quickly away; particularly time like her's, passed in the company of valued friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Be absolute for death; either death or life
Shall thereby be the sweeter.

SHAKESPEAR.

A SHORT time after their return to the castle, the Countess met with an accident of a most serious nature. As she had been upon one of her charitable visits, among her poor tenantry, one of the horses became restive, and so ungovernable, that he was entirely above the

management of the coachman. He plunged, reared, and kicked, in so violent a manner, that he at last overturned the carriage, in which was the Countess alone, who was so much bruised, that she was taken out for dead. She was conveyed to the castle, and a surgeon immediately sent for, who dressed her bruises, and opened a vein; but declared that he dreaded the worst consequences. She continued in a state of insensibility for two days, not taking the least notice of any body about her; the third day, she recovered her recollection, only again to lose it, in the delirium of a fever. The surgeon desired that a physician might be called in, who, when he arrived, said, if matters did not soon take a favourable turn, that dissolution must ensue.

MATILDA watched by her bed-side incessantly, nor could she be persuaded to leave the room, even to take the necessary repose that exhausted nature required; but, throwing herself in an arm chair, would get a few minutes slumber, which was no sooner begun, than anxiety for the Countess broke it.

THE delirium, at length, subsided; but the doctor said, that he did not consider the danger by any means to be over: that the fever was not at all subdued, and that his patient was so weak and exhausted, he feared life was ebbing apace.

Now the Countess had recovered her recollection, she became sensible of the

dangerous situation she was in. She begged the doctor would not deceive her, but inform her candidly, his opinion of what the result of her disease might be.

"I DON'T pretend" said she, "to "look upon death with apathy, as some "would presumptuously make the "world believe they do; yet, trusting "in an all-merciful God and Redeemer, "I can view the awful change ap- "proach, without dismay; and can, "with resignation, yield my soul into "his hands, when it shall please him to "call for it, however soon; I, there- "fore, beg you will not deceive "me."

BY the doctor's reply, she plainly understood that his opinion was, she could

not long survive the present moment.—She desired all her attendants to leave the apartment, for a short time, as she wished to be alone a few minutes with Matilda.

When every one had retired, except Matilda, the Countess said to her, "Do "not weep, my dear girl, but listen "with attention to the important tale "I have to tell; important to you, im-"portant to your dear father, but more "important still is it to another.—Oh! "I well remember the day on which "—— but I faint—I am sick—call "in," —— and she sunk upon her pillow. Matilda rang the bell for assistance, and, after some time, recovered her from the fit into which she had fallen; but she was so weak, that she could not speak. The physician being

sent for, arrived just as she came to herself. He requested that she would not hurry her spirits, by any exertion; as, being kept quiet, was the only chance for her recovery. After seeing some medicines he had prescribed for her administered, he left her, desiring, that if any alteration took place, he might be instantly sent for.

MATILDA could not be prevailed upon to leave the room, but sat by the bed side, the whole of the night. She thought she heard the Countess breathe louder than usual; soon after a still silence reigned; she whispered the maid, that she feared all was over, and gently opened the curtains, when she discovered that the object of her anxiety had dropped into a quiet sleep, calmness

and placidity beaming in a smile from her countenance.

The Countess continued in this tranquil sleep, for about two hours, and when she awoke, was considerably refreshed. When the physician came in the morning, he was surprised, to find his patient so easy, and that the fever had considerably abated; he expressed his hopes, that she would procure another hour or two of rest, the next night, in which case, he said, he should be warranted in giving a favourable opinion of what the result might be. After writing his prescription, he took his leave for the present.

In the course of the day, the Countess said to Matilda, "I find that my

" strength is so exhausted, I cannot go
" through the narrative, that I began
" yesterday, but, must refer your father
" and you, to a manuscript, which,
" when I am dead, you will find in my
" escritoir folded up, and superscribed
" with his name; that will inform
" you, of what I am unable to do by
" speech."

THE next night, the Countess again got some refreshing sleep, and in the morning, the fever having nearly left her, the doctor said he had sanguine hopes. From this time she gradually mended; and, in a few days, she was pronounced out of danger. The physician now discontinued his daily visits, calling only occasionally, whilst the surgeon attended regularly every day, to dress the bruises she had received, which

were still so bad, as to prevent her moving without assistance.

The whole of one day had nearly passed over, without the surgeon making his appearance. The Countess became very uneasy, from the pain she experienced, owing to the dressings remaining too long on, without being renewed. At last, he came, and apologized for not being there at his usual hour; he said, that he had been called upon, to attend a consultation of medical and surgical practitioners, on the case of a person, who was almost at the point of death, the effect of some wounds he lately received, by an assault in the night; and the distance was so great, being in the Cevennes mountains, he could not get back so early as he wished.

THE Countess had no doubt, but this wounded person was the friar, who had haunted Matilda at Baron Longuaville's *fête*, and who had met with his wounds, in his attempt to force her from the young hussar, her partner. She inquired of the surgeon, who the wounded man was; but she was answered in an ambiguous kind of way; which shewed, that he knew him, but was not willing, for some cause or other, to disclose his knowledge to any other person; the Countess could not, therefore, gain the information she wanted.

CHAPTER XIX.

Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

SHAKESPEAR.

THE Countess was now able to be moved to another room; she was recovering fast from the effects of the accident she had met with, and was, in a short time, able to walk about. Matilda and Elinor, both of whom had voluntarily confined themselves with their sick patroness, had now leisure again

to enjoy the fresh air. The Chevalier Melun, who had been prevented seeing the latter, as often as usual, during the illness of the Countess, now again paid her frequent visits, often accompanied by Chatillon, who was in expectation of seeing Matilda; but in that he was disappointed; as, when Elinor was with the Chevalier, her friend always made a point of remaining with the Countess, that she might never be left by both at one time.

One evening Matilda took a walk to the grove, in which she sat, her thoughts being occupied by the recollection of past scenes, till the shades of dusky night began to approach with hasty strides, before she was aware that it had got so late. As she was retiring from it,

into the narrow path that led to the avenue, she was alarmed with the sound of voices, in the direction that she had to go, before she could reach the castle.—She found they approached the place she was in; and, before she could get out of the way, they were close to her. She screamed aloud, and fainted.—When she came to herself again, she found herself supported by a man, whom the darkness of the evening prevented her from distinguishing the features of. She feared she was in the power of an enemy, and was near relapsing into the same state she had just recovered from, when she found, by his voice, that it was Chatillon, in whose arms she had been. He told her, that he had accompanied Melun that afternoon, in his visit to Elinor, in hopes of the happi-

ness of an interview; but, being disappointed, he had strolled into the wood, and wandered about, till darkness came suddenly upon him; that he was going to his horse, which he had left with his servant, at a little distance, when he heard her scream, and, at the same time, saw a man and a woman run towards the castle, with all the speed they could. He said, he hastened to the spot, and was just in time, to save her from falling to the ground, by catching her in his arms.

MATILDA thanked him, for the prompt assistance he had afforded her; at the same time she acknowledged, that from the persons who had alarmed her, being a man and woman, and running towards the castle when she scream-

ed, that she had let fear get the better of reason, otherwise, she would have been convinced, before she gave way to it, that they had the inclination to do her harm; being, as she now supposed, two of the domestics, who had walked down the avenue, for no other purpose, but to enjoy the private conversation of each other.

CHATILLON agreed with her in the probability of her supposition, and added, "But why will the lovely Ma-
"tilda run any risk, by being alone in
"the wood so late? Methinks, that
"ever-valued life, should be guarded
"with more than common care.—
"Guard it according to its value,
"and what care can be too great for
"it?"

" I AM obliged to you," said she, " for the apprehension of ill you feel, " and the regard you express on my ac- " count, but I cannot think there is " any danger so near the castle."

" CALL not my solicitude," said he, " by so cold a name as regard—yes, it " is regard; but, oh, God, how refined! " Refined into pure and ardent love. " O, charming Matilda! might I be " permitted ——."

" I CANNOT hear you on this strain," said she, interrupting him: " I respect " and esteem you, as a friend, and feel " flattered by the kind partiality, with " which you view any trifling accom- " plishments I may be possessed of.—

" The esteem that I entertain for you, is " called forth by a sense of your merit, " which all must acknowledge, who " know you; but beyond that es- " teem, it is impossible that I can ever " go."

" O! SAY not so, but let me hope " _____."

" IF you wish to oblige me, you will " not pursue the subject," said she, interrupting him again; " nay, if " you do not wish me to avoid your " company, you will never again men- " tion a theme, upon which, it is im- " possible I can ever hear you."

SHE spoke the last sentence in so peremptory a tone, that Chatillon

could not add another word. They walked toward the castle, in deep silence, which was only broken by the heavy sighs, that escaped from his bosom.

THEY had not gone far, before they were met by a servant, whom the Countess, being uneasy at her long absence, at so late an hour, had sent to look for Matilda; Chatillon then wishing her a good night, went to mount his horse.

SHE found the Countess alone, who said, " I have been very unhappy on " your account, my dear, why do you " stay out so late?"

MATILDA told her, how she had been surprised, by night coming so suddenly

upon her in the grove, and how she had been alarmed in her road from thence to the castle, by the sound of voices; and mentioned the presence of Chatillon, and their subsequent conversation, which she thought it was her duty to inform the Countess of, placed under her care as she was, in the absence of her father.

"You acted perfectly right," said the Countess; "the stop that you have "put to any farther hopes in Monsieur "Chatillon, was dictated by prudence. "Even if you had felt a partiality for "him, it would have been highly im- "proper to have indulged it, without "first having the approbation of your "father." Elinor now entering the room, the conversation dropped.

At night, when the maid who attended upon Matilda, was lighting her to bed, she said, " I am sure, as how, " Mademoiselle, I am very sorry, that " Peter and I frightened you so much " to-night, in the avenue. But, we " neither of us did not know that it was " you; for we thought, when we saw " something all in white, that it was a " ghost, and we ran off as hard as our " legs could carry us, and came into the " hall, pale and almost fainting; when the " rest of the servants laughing at us so, " Peter plucked up courage to determine to see what sort of a ghost it " was; and, was just going out when " he was met by Nicholas, who said, " he had been sent to look for you; " and, that you and Monsieur Chatillon " were walking up the avenue; we

" then both of us said that you must
" be the ghost."

" WHAT made you think of a ghost?"
asked Matilda, " do you think there
" are any such things?"

" LA! Mademoiselle, why, don't
" you believe in those there things?"

" No, nor ever shall, till I see
" one."

" IF you had seen, and heard what I
" have, Mademoiselle," continued the
talkative maid, " you would not have
" so much unbelief."

" WHAT have you seen and heard?"
said Matilda.

" Last Innocent's day was two years
" —no, I believe it was three years—
" it was very dark, that I remember, for
" I could not see my hand, when I held
" it up before me, me and a fellow-
" servant, had been at a merrimaking;
" and, as we were coming home at
" night, just past the grove, we heard
" the rattling of a chain, and something
" ran against us both, and was very
" near knocking us down; and, all at
" once, we saw a great white thing walk
" before us. We were so frightened,
" that we did not know how we got to
" the castle; but get there we did,
" somehow or other, more dead than
" alive. I remember, Denis would not
" believe we had seen a ghost, but that
" it was the great mastiff dog that had
" broke loose; but I knew better;

" surely, says I, I knows a ghost from a " dog!"

MATILDA having now no further occasion for the services of the maid, her volubility was put an end to, and she left the chamber, after again apologizing, in her way, for the alarm Peter and she had caused in the avenue.

MATILDA was pleased that an opportunity had occurred, for her to speak the sentiments of her mind to Chatillon; which, she hoped, would be the means of preventing him mentioning again the subject of his passion; and would cause him to give up the thoughts of an object, that could not possibly be ever attained by him, and by indulging which, he must entail disqui-

etude on his mind, which it might be difficult to overcome. She hoped his good sense, of which he had a great share, would prevent that, and that his fruitless passion, would cease to give either him or her, any farther uneasiness.

With these ideas, she laid her head upon her peaceful pillow, invoking sleep to seal her eye-lids with refreshing rest.

" Come kind Sleep, nature's sweet
" restorative, that bearest on thy pinions
" healing to the wearied mind of restless
" man! Come, with thy recreative influ-
" ence, and lend thy opiate aid to drive
" away corroding care! Pour thy balmy
" breath into my wakeful breast, and

" banish every gloomy thought! Throw
" thy magic spell o'er my scattered
" senses, and dissolve them into obli-
" vial suspension! Bind my wander-
" ing ideas in silken chains of drowsy
" rest, that I may hail the coming morn,
" with a grateful soul, for the ease thy
" bounty hast imparted!

" NIGHT, dun night, is ruling now
" with ebon sway: thick lowering
" clouds cover heaven's high expanse:
" the hollow blast whistles through the
" desolate arches, with melancholy mur-
" murs: the rain beats with violence
" against the stone-built walls; or, the
" snow drives in volumes, through the
" murky air. All nature is enveloped
" in obscurity and gloom! Darkness
" reigns uncontrouled, upon her mid-

" night throne: all is sad and joyless!
" But thou, kind Sleep, openest wide
" thy comfortable arms, and bringest
" us in gratitude and gladness, through
" the dismal vale, to the bright light of
" the ever-cheering luminary, that gilds
" the orient morn! Sweet Sleep, na-
" ture's dearest friend, hail!!!"

END OF VOL. I.

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